

CHAPTER II

THE LEGEND OF ŚUNAŚŚEPA

Śunaśśeпа is a famous ṛṣi of old. Eight entire hymns¹ of the Ṛgveda, aggregating to 107 verses, are ascribed to his seership, wherein he has praised and propitiated various gods :² Prajāpati, Agni, Savitr, Varuṇa, Viśvedevas, Indra, Aśvins, Uṣas and Soma-pavamāna. Śunaśśeпа is himself referred to by name in three mantras. Two of them³ represent him in bonds having appealed to Varuṇa for release, whereas, the last mantra which is addressed to Agni and that by a different seer,⁴ informs us that Agni released Śunaśśeпа “from a thousand stakes.” Thus, Śunaśśeпа’s deliverance from the yūpastambha is undoubtedly a vedic fact. The present attempt is to trace the growth of this germ into a spreading chestnut despite the ravages of Time.

I

RGVEDA

The Ṛgveda references are as follows :

(A) Verses wherein Śunaśśeпа’s name is mentioned.

- (a) Tād innáktam tād dívā máhyamāhuḥ
tād ayám kéto hṛdā á ví caṣṭe /
Śunaśśeпо yám áhavad grbhítāḥ
só asmān rájā Váruṇo mumoktu //
- RV 1.24.12.

Translation—

They say that to me by night and by day, and the same sentiment strikes my heart (mind) as well. May Varuṇa the king, to whom Śunaśśeпа in bonds addressed himself, liberate us.

- (b) Śunaśśeпо hyáhvad grbhítāḥ
triṣvādityám drupadēṣu baddhāḥ /
ávainam rájā Váruṇaḥ sasṛjyāt
vidvām ádabdhó ví mumoktu páśān //
- RV 1.24.13.

1. RV 1.24 to 30 (7 hymns) 97 verses plus RV 9.3.10 verses, total 107.

2. Mentioned in the order in which they were praised (cf. M. Sarvā p. 6). Agni alone was approached twice (AB), once with one mantra (RV 1.24.2) and the second time with a series of 22 mantras (1.26.1-10 and 27.1-12). Geldner (Der Rígvēda I, p. 21) takes both verses (1.24.1. and 2) as addressed to Agni. The reason, perhaps, is that “Ka” is god Prajāpati according to tradition, but an interrogative pronoun according to recent opinion. “Ko vai nāma prajāpatiḥ” (AB 3.21) iti śruteḥ kasya iti śabdasāmānyāt anayā prajāpatireva upādṛtaḥ iti gamyate—Sāyaṇa.

3. RV 1.24.12 and 13.

4. RV 5.2.7 Kumāra son of Atri is the ṛṣi.

Translation—

To three stakes bound, Śunaśśepa⁵ has verily addressed himself to the son of Aditi (Varuṇa). May Varuṇa the king set this (suppliant) free, may He, (who is) wise and above restrictions, entirely remove the fetters.

(c) Śunaś ciecchépam nīditam sahasrāt
yūpād amuñco āsamīṣṭa hī śāḥ /
evāsmād agne ví mumugdhi páśān
hótaś cikitva ihā tú niśāḍya //⁶
RV 5.2.7.

Translation—

You did liberate the fast-fettered Śunaśśepa from a thousand fold stake and he became pacified, indeed. Even so do you, O Learned Priest of the gods, Agni, sitting here (with us) loosen our bonds.

On a close study of the above verses, certain impressions are irresistible. The first two verses which are ascribed to Śunaśśepa do not seem to be his at all from a rational point of view. In the first, the worshipper prays, "May Varuṇa the king, to whom Śunaśśepa addressed himself, liberate us," that is, on the precedent of Śunaśśepa's being saved by Varuṇa, a later devotee is seeking similar favour. All right, but the very next verse says: Śunaśśepa in fetters prays to God Varuṇa: may Varuṇa set him free and may he remove the fetters. The situation must be that while Śunaśśepa is praying to the god for succour, those by the side are recommending him for Varuṇa's mercy. This is in itself reasonable, but how, at all, is it consistent with the previous verse? There, it is definitely a past event, here

5. 'triṣu drupadeṣu baddhah' literally would mean 'bound to three stakes'. But the threefold nature of the stakes is not quite intelligible, whether Śunaśśepa was bound to three different posts or whether, as Sāyaṇa says, he was tied to a single post in three places (trisaṅkhyā-keṣu drupadeṣu drohī kāṣṭhasya yūpasya padeṣu pradeśaviśeṣeṣu baddhah). But, then, how to reconcile the other statement that Śunaśśepa was delivered from a thousand stakes (Śunaś ciecchépam nīditam sahasrād yūpād amuñcah)? Wilson (Tr. Vol. I, p. 63, 1850) understands a sort of tripod and adds "its specification is consistent with the popular legend." This is to be corroborated. Geldner translates 'an drei Blöcke gebunden' (i.e. bound to three blocks), and says in the note: "drupadā (eigentlich wohl Fußgestell) ist der Block, in den der Gefangene gelegt wurde (AV 19.47.9, 50.1), AV 6.63.3 das Fusseisen." While describing the process of niyojana i.e. fastening the victim to the sacrificial post, Sāyaṇa's commentary (A13) is somewhat interesting: Ajigarta is supposed to say—"aham enam Śunaśśepam yūpe niyokṣyāmi raśanavā katyām, śīraśi, pādāyor baddhvā raśanāgrasya yūpe bandhanam niyojanam tad aham kariṣyāmi." Niyojana is defined as the act of fastening with rope the victim in three parts of his person namely, the waist, the head and the feet, and then the end of the rope to be tied to the sacrificial post. Rather an unequivocal explanation, it perhaps describes the actual practice at sacrifice as Sāyaṇa knew (cf. RV 1.21.15 and 25.21). With such dubious evidence, it was best to translate literally.

6. Sahasrāt anekarūpāt yūpāt (Sāyaṇa). Regarding the unusual separation of a proper noun Śunaś ciecchépam, Sāyaṇa remarks—Śunaśśepamiti padasya madhye padāntarasya samhitāyām vyatyayenāvasthūtiḥ. The advent of a different word in the middle of one word is therefore acknowledged to be an irregularity. cf. BD 2.115.

Śunaśśepam narāśamasam dyāva naḥ prthivī ca /
Niraskṛteti prabhṛtiṣṭh arthādāsīt kramo yathā //

which indicates that the regular order of words was determined according to the sense, when the text read like—Sunāś ciecchépam, narā vā śamsam, dyāvā naḥ prthivī, niru svasāram askṛta. It is to be noted that the Padapāṭha restores the word e.g. Śunaśśépam/ cit etc.

it is like a thing happening in our presence. The verbs used in the two verses do not help us to disentangle, because they seem to have been used indiscriminately too, *e.g.* *ahvat* (a-Aorist Indicative, 3rd sing. of *hū*, to call), *mumoktu* (perfect imperative, 3rd sing. of *muc*, to release), *sasrjyāt* (perfect optative, 3rd sing. of *srj*, to emit).⁷ Hence they cannot enlighten the sequence of events. The legend depicts that these mantras were uttered by Śunaśśepa in order to obtain release, whereas the two verses, just referred to regard the release as a thing of the past. Two inferences are possible. (a) These are not Śunaśśepa hymns at all (RV 1.24 to 30), but tradition so ascribes, *i.e.* at the Samhitā stage, these hymns were assembled and the occurrence of Śunaśśepa's name in the two verses was responsible for the ascription; hence we shall accept it on faith. (b) Or, the two verses in question are a later insertion or interpolation, if that fearful word may be used: The various hymns seen by Śunaśśepa, handed down by tradition, were put together by the Samhitā-designers, in the course of which it is just possible that these two verses were inserted in order to remind themselves of that great Vedic event. However reasonable, the first inference appears rather irrational, as it carries possibilities to the very extreme. The second inference may be considered.⁸ It becomes plausible if we remove the two verses from their context and review the whole collection; then, it will read like the group of praises and psalms from any other poet of the R̥gveda. The two verses, no doubt, lend colour to the whole group of seven hymns (RV 1.24-30) and specially to RV 1.24.1 and 2, in the light of the "Parar̥ksāta-gāthā" or the Śunaśśepākhyāna which is elaborately related in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa.⁹

If scholars believe in the theory of interpolation as an important and inevitable factor in textual criticism, then there can be no reason to demur at this conclusion, namely, Śunaśśepa did not compose the two mantras (1.24.12) and 13), but a later poet, possibly the compilers of the Śataṛcina maṇḍala. Interpolation is a natural instinct in man and as such cannot be considered a crime. Considering the texts which have been transmitted for centuries by oral tradition only—*viz.* the Veda and Vedic literature—the aspect of interpolation need not be doubted at all, "for the organs of tradition were not machines, but men."¹⁰

It is well-known that many verses and hymns have formed part of the later Samhitās of the Yajus, Sāma and Atharva-vedas. Many a variant reading has been noticed of the R̥gvedic text.¹¹ Such a thing could be detected because of the availability, of the different recensions. In the case of the R̥gveda, only the

7. MVG paragraphs 508, 490 and 489 respectively.

8. Compare Roth's opinion, analogous to this, explained by Keith in his introduction to the Rig-Veda Brāhmaṇas Translated (HOS Vol. 25—1920) p. 64.

9. 7.13-18, more of this in another section.

10. Dr. Katre, Introduction to Indian Textual Criticism (K. P. H., Bombay, 1941), p. 54. The nature and causes of corruption in transmitted texts have been analysed and no less than 19 of them have been enumerated with illustrations (chapter V). If the principles are applied to the Vedic Text-transmission as well, important results may be obtained.

11. To give an instance, please see note 22 in the previous chapter.

Śākala-Saṁhitā is what we have now. Who knows what Bāṣkala and others would have revealed in a crucial passage like this ?

Another fact is worth notice. Śunaśśepa's deliverance is, to Viśvāmitra, a feather in the cap. The achievement is of no less magnitude than his crossing of the Rivers (RV 3.33). But Śunaśśepa, the god-given (Deva-rāta) son and heir to Viśvāmitra, is nowhere, even indirectly, mentioned in the Viśvāmitra maṇḍala of two and sixty hymns either by the Seer or by his descendents. Nor is this miracle reflected anywhere among the hundred and four hymns of Vasiṣṭha, who officiated as the Brahmā priest in that sacrifice which witnessed Śunaśśepa's ' sacrifice ' and deliverance. Further, it was the fancy of a member of the Atri family, —in no way connected with the affair, —to record the event in clear terms (Śunaśśe ciecchēpam nīditam sahāsrāt, yūpād amuñeo āsamiṣṭa hī śāh/ 5.2.7^{ab}). Undoubtedly, Kumāra Ātreya (the Ṛṣi of the hymn) is describing what was current in his family circle. A slight disharmony may be discerned even here in that Agni delivered Śunaśśepa from the stakes, not Varuṇa. Strangely enough, the Saṁhitā appears to corroborate this, because Śunaśśepa, —let us believe the traditional account for the moment —after approaching God KA in the first instance (1.24.1), addresses himself next to Agni (Agnér vayām prathamāsyāṁtānām mánāmahe cāru devāsya nāma// 1.24.2).

There is, of course, an appeal to Varuṇa in 1.24.12 and 13 for freedom from the bonds, but these we have preferred to consider as later insertions. 1.24.15¹² and 1.25.21¹³ appeal to Varuṇa to release the chains from the top, the middle and the bottom. The pāśa is a special attribute of Varuṇa¹⁴ and a prayer to him should be naturally charged with that sentiment. Śunaśśepa was Varuṇa-grhita¹⁵ (seized by Varuṇa), says the Yajurveda. According to the graphic narration in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, the release from the fetters was actually effected when the three mantras in praise of Uṣas¹⁶ were uttered one by one. So with regard to this great Deliverance, we shall revert to the original document, the R̥gveda, and repeat the problem which faced Śunaśśepa himself—" which God's charming name shall we cherish " !

(B) Other verses indirectly bearing on the Śunaśśepa legend :

The opening verses of the Śunaśśepa series have a peculiar appeal ; hence they are recorded here—

12. Ūduttamām Varuṇa pāśam asmād āvādhamām ví madhyamām śrathāya / áthā vayām āditya vraté távānāgasō áditye syāma //

13. Ūduttamām mumugdhi no ví pāśam madhyamām cṛta / āvādhamāni jīvāse //

14. Release from Varuṇa-pāśa is the burden of the prayers addressed to that God in all the Saṁhitās, most of which do not refer to the Śunaśśepa incident at all. E.g. the verse " Ūduttamām," which is a prayer to Varuṇa for release from his fetters is cited about 20 times in the various Vedic texts, it is only on two occasions it is associated with Śunaśśepa. Cf. Bloomfield's concordance, and VI 2.886 n4 under Śunaśśepa.

15. Cf. TS 5.2.1.3 ; KS 19.11.

16. RV 1.30.20-22 (Sa uṣasam tuṣṭāva uttareṇa tṛcena / tasya ha sma ṛcyṛcyuktāyām ví pāśo mumuce / AV 7.16).

Bull DCRI xi-13

Kāśya nūnām katamāśyāmṛtānām
 mánāmahe cáru devāśya náma //
 kó no mahyā áditaye púnar dāt
 pitāram ca drśéyam mātāram ca //
 RV 1.24.1.

Agnér vayām prathamāśyāmṛtānām
 mánāmahe cáru devāśya náma //
 sá no mahyā áditaye púnar dāt
 pitāram ca drśéyam mātāram ca //
 RV 1.24.2.

Translation—

Of whom or of which god among the immortals shall we cherish the charming name? Who would give us back to the great Aditi? And would I ever see father and mother?¹⁷

God Agni's charming name we shall cherish, for he is the first of the immortals. He would give us back to the great Aditi. And then would I see father and mother.

Shorn of the story-background, the first verse reflects the fervency with which the devotee asks himself the question: which god's name shall we cherish? Such an enquiring spirit is quite in consonance with the spirit of the Vedic seer, at the dawn of our civilization. Compare the other hymn 'Káśmai devāya' which has a similar appeal. But it is the reference to the father and the mother that makes the allusion to some extent absolutely reasonable if not necessary.

17. Text—pitāram ca drśéyam mātāram ca. This is usually understood to express the anxiety on the part of Śunaśśepa to get back to his parents, so he laments—am I destined to see my parents once again and so on. (cf. Nītimāñjarī. st. 11). This is not correct. As we agree that the verses are expressed by Śunaśśepa, it is necessary to look into the situation in which he simply ran, door to door, in search of a saviour. The idea is: thus have I been forsaken by parents who gave me birth in this world. Ah, they are going to cut me up as if I were an animal! Is there a god who could restore me to life on Earth (to Aditi)? Can I find a father and a mother once again? Let me think of Agni, he is the foremost of the gods. He will restore me to life and I would find a father and a mother (in him, i.e. in Agni indeed). That is how Śunaśśepa's situation is heightened with pathos. He never wished to run back to his parents. (cf. Rāmāyaṇa 1.64.4-Gorresio)

Na me'sti mātā na pitā na suhr̥ṇna ca bāndhavāḥ /
 Trātum arhasi mām tyaktam bandhubhiḥ śaraṇāgatam //

This is corroborated by the evidence of the Aitareya which depicts the situation graphically:

atha ha Śunaśśepa iksāṃśakre, amānuṣam iva
 vai mā viśasiṣyanti, hantāham devatā upadhāvāmīti,
 sa prajāpatim eva prathamam devatānām anusasāra,
 kasya nūnam kutamāśyāmṛtānām ityetaṃrē /

As the father Ajigarta came forward, sharpening the knife, in order to cut him up, Śunaśśepa, in utter consternation and helplessness, bursts forth with the mantra, 'kasya nūnam' ending with 'pitāram ca drśéyam mātāram ca'. In such a situation, that Śunaśśepa was prompted by filial love to say it, is truly incoherent. Secondly, we may observe that Śunaśśepa's lament, whether he is destined to find a father and a mother on earth when the real parents deserted him, was heard by the gods. Viśvāmitra became the father; gods blessed the change over, which was in the nature of an adoption; Śunaśśepa was named Devarāta: 'God-given'.

We may at once believe that Śunaśśepa uttered it when he was in such a predicament. It was at a later stage of course that the memorable verses found place in the Samhitā.

One word about the hundred verses, alleged by the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa to have been uttered by Śunaśśepa when he was yoked for the sacrifice. A perusal of the said verses will at once tell us, from their tenor and content, that they were not appropriate for the occasion.¹⁸ A man destined to die would first pray for his life, not for cattle, not for the destruction of the enemy; nor even could he have the peace of mind to dilate upon the merits and exploits of each god in such a complacent manner, sometimes providing even sublime and serene poetry. Except for three or four verses in the whole series,¹⁹ there is not much of a direct appeal for deliverance from the stakes. Dare we then discredit the account of the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa? No, we need not discredit, but we can clearly perceive the *raison d'être* of such a development.

Mr. Narahari²⁰ has related the Śunaśśepa hymns indicated in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa straight to their Ṛgvedic source, chapter and verse, about which fact, however, there was never a doubt implied or expressed. Keith's observation, with which Narahari is unable to agree,²¹ was with regard not to the authenticity but to the relevancy of the Śunaśśepa hymns in their being worked into the Śunaśśepa legend. Keith has in view the subject-matter and the general trend of the hymns while making the remark in question.²² After tracing the AB quotations to their Ṛgvedic source, Narahari declares "It is thus clear that the account given in the AB about Śunaśśepa is ratified to a very great extent by the Ṛgveda."

18. cf. Keith. JRAS (1911), p. 988, Winternitz III. Vol. I, p. 215 (1927); Wilson quoting Dr. Rosen (Tr. Vol. I, p. 60 original edition), also Muir, OST I. p.359.

19. RV 1.24.1,2,15; 25.21.

20. Ref. 'A Volume of Studies in Indology' presented to Prof. P. V. Kane (Poona, 1941). Mr. Narahari's article entitled 'The Legend of Śunaśśepa in Vedic and post-Vedic Literature,' pp. 302-307.

21. "It is admittedly the case that the Ṛgveda verses which are put in the mouth of Śunaśśepa have nothing to do with the legend in the Brāhmaṇa," Keith. JRAS (1911) p. 988.

22. The expression Śatareina is thus explained by the Aitareya Āraṇyaka :

Tam śatam varṣānyabhyāreāt tasmāt śatam varṣāni puruṣāyaso bhavanti, tam yaccha-
tam varṣānyabhyāreāt tasmāt śatareinaś tasmācchatareina ityācakṣata etam eva santam // 2.2.1.

"For a hundred years he approached it. Therefore a hundred are the years of the life of man. Because he approached him for one hundred years, therefore, they are the Śatareins. Therefore they call him who is (prāṇa) the Śatareins." Tr. Keith (Anecdota Oxoniensia Series, Oxford).

But Śaḍguruśiṣya (Macdonell, Sarvā, p. 59) has a more rational explanation. Ādyaṃanda-lasthā ṛṣayaḥ Śatareina iti samjñitāh/ Reām śatam śataream/ Ādyaśyareṣṇ ṛkṣatayogena chatrin-
nyāyena śatareinaḥ sarve/ Dvyadhikē'pi śatoktīrībāhulyāt/ Uktam hi—

Śatareisamjñā vijñeyā hyādyamandaladarśinaḥ /
Dadarśātau Madhucchandā dvyadhikam yad reām śatam /
Tatsāhacaryād anye'pi vijñeyās tu Śatareinaḥ /
Acchatrās chatrināikena yathā vai chatrinō'bhavan /

According to the tabular statement of the Sarvānukrama, prepared by Max Müller, as complement to his first edition of RV with Sāyana's commentary, there are altogether 16 seers (191 hymns and 1971 verses) in the first maṇḍala, many of the seers are centurions e.g. Madhucchanda Vaiśvāmītra (102), Medhātithi Kāṇva (143), Śunaśśepa (97), Hiraṇyastūpa (71), Ghaura Kāṇva (96), Praskaṇva

No clear evidence is adduced to support this statement which is rather misleading and untrue. The quotations which are in the nature of praise and prayer to the several gods, do by no stretch of imagination, suggest any detail of the story. The Ṛgvedic statement has only this much to say that Śunaśśepa who had been bound by fetters to the sacrificial post was liberated by Varuṇa (1.24.12) or by Agni (5.2.7) according to another seer. It is only reasonable to suppose that the Śatarcina maṇḍala²² was compiled, by putting together the centurion seers and their hymns together; among them came the Ṛṣi Śunaśśepa. Based on the then current popular stories, the redactors introduced the name of Śunaśśepa also in the collection, as above explained. And the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa spun out a beautiful yarn and found use for the series of hymns collected in the maṇḍala. It cannot be explained, however, why and how the Śunaśśepa hymn in the Pavamāna maṇḍala (RV 9.3) escaped the notice of the AB in this connection. Needless to say that Soma was as much an object of praise in a sacrifice as the other gods.

II

SAMHITĀS OTHER THAN THE ṚGVEDA

(1) The Taittirīya Saṁhitā has the following passage referring to Śunaśśepa story—

Śunaśśēpam Ājigartim Vārūno'grhṇāt sā etām Vārūṇīm apaśyat tātā vai sā ātmānam Varuṇapāśād amuñcat Vārūṇo vā etām grhṇāti yā ukhām pratimuñcāta úduttamām Varuṇa pāśam asmād ityāhātmanānam evaitāyā /²³

“Varuṇa seized Śunaśśepa Ājigarti, he saw this verse addressed to Varuṇa, by it he freed himself from the noose of Varuṇa; Varuṇa seizes him who takes the fire-pan, “From us the highest knot, O Varuṇa” he says, verily, thereby he frees himself from Varuṇa’s noose.”²⁴

The Taittirīya context is the ‘preparation of the ground for the Fire’. It can be seen how artificial is the connection of the Ṛgvedic mantra. ‘Úduttamām’ (RV 1.24.15) praying Varuṇa to loosen his pāśa at the top, middle and bottom. The outlook is entirely sacrificial. At any rate what is important for our study is the allusion to the bare fact that Śunaśśepa was seized by Varuṇa and when he praised him with this mantra “Úduttamām”²⁵ he was released from the fetters.

Kāṇva (82), Savya Āṅgīrasa (72), Nodhā Gautama (74), Parāśara Śāktya (56), Gotama Rāhūgaṇa (204), Kutsa Āṅgīrasa (212), Kākṣīvat (151), Paruccheṇa (100), Dīrghatamas (242) and Agastya (218). Just a few verses are not accounted as they occur in the Samvāda hymns. A single hymn of 8 verses is ascribed to Jetā Mādhuccandasa. The above details are given in order to show that after the family-maṇḍalas, the next step in the Ṛgveda-redaction was to bring together the the works of seers, next in importance. No definite principle can yet be discerned, underlying these “collected works.”

23. TS 5.2.1.3 (Ānandāśrama edition).

24. Tr. Keith. The Veda of the Black Yajus School (HOS Vols. 18 and 19) 1914. The present reference is to Vol. 19 p. 404.

25. This verse has been borrowed from RV by all the other Saṁhitās, which fact emphasises the importance of God Varuṇa in men’s conduct and outlook. Release from the chain of worldly existence or final emancipation is yet the highest pursuit of man according to our belief even today.

(2) The Kāthaka Saṁhitā—

.....Uduttamam Varuṇa pāśam asmad iti Śunaśśepo vā etām Ājigartir Varuṇagr̥hito'paśyat tayā vai sa Varuṇapāśād amucyata Varuṇapāśam evaitayā pramuñcate ... //26

This passage provides support for the version of the TS. Śunaśśepa, son of Ājigarta, seized by Varuṇa saw the mantra “Uduttamam” etc. and thereby was freed from Varuṇa's noose, and Varuṇa's noose will loosen itself with this mantra.

(3) The Kapiṣṭhala-Kaṭha²⁷ alludes to the Śunaśśepa legend in exactly the same words as the above.

(4) The Atharva-Veda Saṁhitā does not record the Śunaśśepa story but has two hymns of which he is the Seer, viz. AV. 6.25 and 7.83.²⁸ The former according to Kauśika Sūtra accompanies a rite against a disease of the neck and shoulders (gaṇḍāmālā). The latter is a hymn to Varuṇa praying for relief from fetters. It is also held as a remedy against dropsy. The third verse of this hymn is the same as RV 1.24.15, the famous “Uduttamam.”

III

BRĀHMAṆAS

(1) Śunaśśepa is immortalised in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa.²⁹ It is mysterious, however, that neither the famous Vedic seer nor the story of his deliverance is ever referred to in any other Brāhmaṇa.

To recapitulate the story as given in the AB: Hariścandra of the Ikṣvāku race, son of Vedhas, was childless. Once the sages Parvata and Nārada were his guests. The king asked³⁰ the latter with wonderment as to why all beings under the Sun, endowed with intelligence or no, alike long for a son, what is it exactly they gain etc. And Nārada came forth with his reply in ten gāthās, expatiating on the merits of begetting a son, e.g. “Food is life for man, clothing his protection, gold his beauty, cattle his strength. His wife is a friend, his daughter is a pity, but the son is his Light in the highest world.”³¹ Nārada further, advised Hariścandra to approach Varuṇa praying for a son whom he might again surrender to him in a sacrifice. Accordingly the king approached Varuṇa who granted his request.

26. KS 19.11 (Kāthaka-Saṁhitā ed. Satavalekar, Aundh)

27. Kap. S. 21,1 (Kapiṣṭhala-Kaṭha-Saṁhitā ed. Raghu Vira, I.)

28. As a seer of hymns, Śunaśśepa appears in a few other Saṁhitās e.g. SV. Pūrvārcika 1.2.5,7; 1.3.8; 2.6.9,10; 2.7.9. VS 10.27-34, 11.14-16, 12.12, 18.45-53, 21.1,2; 35.11. These are but stray verses, most of which are repetitions of his Ṛgvedic composition. As they do not bear on the legend of Śunaśśepa, no further consideration would be necessary. The list of Vedic Ṛṣis is conveniently compiled by C. V. Vaidya in his History of Sanskrit Literature: Vedic Period (1930), pp. 200 and 207.

29. AB 7.13-18 (Ānandāśrama edition).

30. Yam nu imam putram icchanti ye vijānanti ye ca na /
kim svit putrena vindate tan ma ācakṣva Nārada // Ibid.7.13.

31. Annam ha prāṇaḥ śaraṇam ha vāso rūpam hiranyam paśavo vivāhāḥ / Sakḥā ha jāyā
kṛpaṇam ha duhitā jyotir ha putraḥ paraṁ vyoman // Ibid.

The son, Rohita, was born. But on the birth of the Light of his heart as much as of the worlds, the king was loth to give him up to the God. So he pleaded excuses and put off the dreadful event successively, for ten days of confinement, then when the teeth emerge, when they fall, emerge again, and finally when the boy grows into a youth fit to wear armour. Varuṇa persisted in his demand and Rohita, being apprised by the father of the old contract with the God, somehow did not submit but went away to the forest, bow in hand. For one full year he wandered. Meanwhile Varuṇa was wroth and seized Hariścandra, who, as a result began to suffer from dropsy. Rohita heard this and was coming back to town when Indra, in the guise of a man, came up and exhorted him to wander more and more. There is such good in moving about, not sitting idle, for "The fortune of a man who sits, sits also, it rises when he rises, it sleeps when he sleeps, it moves well when he moves. Wander!"³² Or again, "He who wanders finds honey, he who wanders finds sweet figs (udumbaram); look at the pre-eminence of the Sun, who wandering, never³³ tires." Thus on the sixth round, Rohita met, in the forest, the sage Ajīgarta, son of Sūyavasa, seized by starvation.³⁴ He had three sons, Śunaḥpuccha Śunaśśepa and Śunolāṅgūla. Rohita said, "O sage, I will give a hundred, I will buy myself off with one of these (sons)." Then the father was unwilling to part with the eldest, and the mother with the youngest. Hence the middle one Śunaśśepa was sold. Rohita brought him to his father and told him his proposal. Hariścandra approached Varuṇa who readily agreed.

The sacrifice began, eminent priests officiating. Viśvāmitra as Hotṛ, Jamadagnias Adhvaryu, Ayāsyas Udāgṛ and Vaśiṣṭha as Brahmā. The victim was due to be taken through various rites before the actual sacrifice, but the rites of niyojana (binding the paśu to the stake) and viśasana (cutting it up with knife) were too repulsive to the good Jamadagni (the Adhvaryu, on whom devolved all the manual labour of the Sacrifice), he refused. There came this Ajīgarta, again, willing to bind him to the stake for a hundred more; and further to cut him up with knife for a third hundred cows. Inhumanity perhaps reached its zenith, difficult even for the gods to bear.³⁵ So, when the poor victim, Śunaśśepa, a human being after all, endowed with thinking, poured forth his fervent prayers to the gods in utter

32. Āste bhaga āsinasya ūrdhvas tiṣṭhati tiṣṭhataḥ /
Ṣete nipadyamānasya carāti carato bhaḡaḥ caraiva // Ibid. 7.15.

33. Caran vai madhu vindati caran svādum udumbaram /
Sūryasya paśya śremāṇam yo na tandraiyate caran // Ibid.

34. Here is a genuine difficulty. The text reads—"āsanayā paritam" how can it mean 'overcome with hunger'? It were well to have anaśanayā (= anaśanena, fem. being Vedic). Keith evidently felt it; and preferred the Śāṅkh ŚS reading 'āsanāyāparitam'. (Rig-Veda Brāhmaṇas Translated. HOS Vol. 25, 1920, p. 303 n. 9). Āsanāyā (f) = hunger (Monier-Williams). But, pray, look at the other ghastly attribute, 'putram bhakṣamāṇam' in the Śāṅkhāyana! Perhaps that renders Rohita's offer to buy up the son a logical step.

35. VI says that at this stage Viśvāmitra's advice inspired Śunaśśepa to ask the gods to release him. So also Wilson in his resumé. This is not true to the Aitareya, wherein, Śunaśśepa, having been driven by necessity, simply 'ran' to the gods—'amānuṣamiva vai mā viśasiṣyanti, hantāham devatā upadhāvāmīti'. Ref. VI, II, pp. 385-6, Wilson RV Tr. Vo Vol. I, p. 60 n. Viśvāmitra's advice to the effect is, no doubt, mentioned in later literature like the Rāmāyaṇa, which however provides justification for Śunaśśepa choosing to sit on the lap of Viśvāmitra (aṅkam āsasāda, see infra 38) amidst so many great men.

helplessness, they heard! Agni, the liaison deity, between gods and mortals, steered Śunaśśepa through; the catastrophe was averted. (Prajāpati), Agni, Savitr, Varuṇa, Viśvedevas, Indra, Aśvins and Uṣas—all these were propitiated with fulsome praise. Indra presented a golden chariot to Śunaśśepa. As the praise of Uṣas, in three verses, was being uttered, the bonds fell off one by one. Śunaśśepa was free. And Hāriscandra was at the same time cured of the ailment.³⁶

Then the high priests invited Śunaśśepa to perform the closing rite called the abhiṣecanīya. Śunaśśepa in this ceremony saw what is called the 'añjassava,'³⁷ a certain improved method of pressing the Soma. Naturally afterwards, he became the idol of admiration of all concerned. But what was his station in future? Forsaken by his parents, what home to seek for shelter? He straight away went and sat on the lap of Viśvāmitra, as a son sits on the father's.³⁸ When "all's well that end's well," Ajigarata asked Viśvāmitra to give back his son. The latter refused on the ground that the gods gave Śunaśśepa to him. Thus he became Devarāta Vaiśvāmitra. Then Ajigarta addressed his invitation to Śunaśśepa himself— "At least, you come, both of us (father and mother) invite you. Āngirasa you are by birth, son of Ajigarta and reputed as poet. O sage, do not break away from the ancestral line. Do return to me." How courteous and complimentary! Śunaśśepa, however, sharply retorted: "They saw you, knife in hand, a thing which they did not find even among the Śūdras. And in lieu of me, you, O Āngiras, chose to have three hundred cows." "That is just what burns my heart, my dear," replied Ajigarta, "I verily committed a sin. Let me make amends, all the three hundred cows will go to you." Śunaśśepa said again, "Once a man commits sin, he will surely commit another. You did not shun to behave like a Śūdra, and an inextinguishable sin have you committed." Viśvāmitra supported this last statement, rapprochement was impossible.

Viśvāmitra renewed his invitation to Śunaśśepa to join him only: "You shall be the eldest of my sons. Your progeny will have priority. My divine heritage shall be yours, with that I invite you." Much too clever for an ancient tale: Śunaśśepa wanted his rank and status in the family to be clearly defined and accepted unequivocally by all the heirs concerned. Śunaśśepa in this context addressed Viśvāmitra as 'Rājaputra,' which, according to Sāyaṇa, raised an issue as to how a Brāhmaṇa by birth can change over to a Kṣatriya clan. But Viśvāmitra, "friend of all," was truly magnanimous. He had a hundred and one sons. He called them all promptly, and said "Listen to me Madhucchandas, Rṣabha, Reṇu, Aṣṭaka (and all), Are there any among you brothers who are not for Śunaśśepa's priority?"³⁹ Madhucchandas was midmost of the sons. The fifty brothers elder to

36. The pertinent RV references have been considered in the previous section.

37. Apart from the particular act of Soma-pressing, this expression is applied by Sāyaṇa to the final rite itself—So'yam añjassavaḥ iṣṭipāsūsāṅkaryamantareṇa añjasā rjūmārgaṇa anuṣṭhitatvāt/ Ibid. 7.17.

38. atha ha Śunaśśepo Viśvāmitrasyaṅkam āsāsāda / Ibid.

39. atha ha Viśvāmitraḥ putrān āmantrayāmāsa Madhucchandāḥ śṛnotana Rṣabho Reṇu Aṣṭakaḥ / Ye ke ca bhrātaraḥ stha nāsmāi jyaīṣṭhyāya kalpadhivam iti // Ibid. 7.17.

him thought that the proposal was not in their interest, they were cursed by the angry father into low and barbarous life. The other fifty with Madhucchandas as leader⁴⁰ humbly submitted : whatever father proposes, we shall abide by, and turning to Śunaśśepa, gave him word also, saying ' we shall put you in front and shall remain behind you.' Viśvāmitra was much pleased, blessed them all heartily. Devarāta (Śunaśśepa) inherited a double share *viz.* the overlordship of the Jahnus and the divine lore.⁴¹

This is the Śunaśśepa legend which is prescribed to be narrated at a king's coronation. Seated on a golden seat, the Hotā narrates, seated also on a golden seat, the Adhvaryu responds ; and the king just after being anointed listens. The narrative ends with the dakṣiṇā : a thousand for the narrator, a hundred for him who responds ; the seats and a white mule chariot also to the Hotā. The phalaśruti declares one is absolved of all sin, and those who desire sons will get them by causing this story to be narrated.

Sahasram ākhyātre dadyācchatam parigaritre etc caivāsane śvetaś caśvatarīratho hotuḥ, putrakāmā hāpyākhyāpayeran labhante ha putrān labhante ha putrān // (AB 7.18).

The legend as narrated by the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa may now be briefly reviewed. The Ṛgvedic nucleus consists merely of Śunaśśepa's deliverance from the pāśa (fetters) by Varuṇa or may be by Agni, and eight hymns having a total of 107 verses (RV 1.24 to 30-97 verses, plus RV 9.3 having 10 = 107) have been ascribed to his seership. It is important that there is no allusion to the episode in the maṇḍalas of the Viśvāmitras or the Vasiṣṭhas, whereas an unconnected Ātreya, Ṛṣi Sadāprṇa, (RV 5.2.7) praises Agni for the great act. No wonder, the episode finds place in the Śataicina maṇḍala, which constitutes, so to say, the "collected works" of the centurion seers. Most, if not all, legends of the Ṛgveda are concentrated in the first Maṇḍala. So when the hymns of the Ṛṣi Śunaśśepa were put together, possibly, the redactors of the Saṁhitā introduced the two verses bearing Śunaśśepa's name. It is clearly patchwork and the two verses, though occurring consecutively, betray a lack of logical sequence.

Between the age of the Ṛgveda and that of the Brāhmaṇa, the popular element had full sway evidently and quite a harmonious account has been presented in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa. The Śunaśśepa-event as the 'middle' part we have a beginning and an end tagged on. The Age represented the glorification of the Karma-kāṇḍa, performance of sacrifices was the rule of the day. Varuṇa as the Lord of

40. Witness the fate of the midmost son, again ! Madhucchandas, is called upon to submit to family interests like Śunaśśepa himself.

41. Adhiyata Devarāto rikthayor ubhayor ṛṣiḥ / Jahnūnām cādhipatyē daive vede ca Gāthiṇām // (AB 7.18). And to pursue the scholastic issue, it may be realised that the grant of the divine lore helped Śunaśśepa to transfer himself to the Kṣatriya family. But was it not a fact that the same divine lore, of which Viśvāmitra was already the proud possessor, had already elevated him to the rank and status of a Brāhmaṇa ? The whole contention is thoroughly unfounded as we shall prove in the next chapter that Viśvāmitra was a Ṛṣi par excellence and belonged to an age when there was no such distinction, when efficiency and wisdom alone raised a man to the pedestal.

Pāśa (Pāśi) was the most powerful god, more than his grace, which was not wanting, his wrath kept all people alert. Therefore the Samhitās reverberate with prayers to appease his anger. The pact between Hariścandra and Varuṇa to sacrifice even the son if he should be born, the natural disinclination to sacrifice the son—after he is born, man dodging god, the grown-up youth finding the wide world more inviting than heaven through the medium of the gallows, divine wrath, inevitable suffering and hunting for expiation, then a silver lining in the cloud—these are trends which are realistic and which have been logically worked into a fitting prologue.

Even so the epilogue. Śunaśśepa, by the grace of the gods, was reborn as it were, having been saved from the yūpa. To whom should he belong? What rank should he hold? Śunaśśepa himself elected to join Viśvāmitra, who, true to his name, was the 'friend of all', the champion of the distressed. Certain home touches give perfection to the denouement. Viśvāmitra had a hundred and one sons. Perhaps in the exuberance of his generous heart, the great sage conferred upon the god-given son all privileges of primogeniture. One's heart would melt with sympathy for that army of forsaken sons, a hundred and one, and specially the fifty recalcitrant ones that were cursed. But the sage who made and unmade things knew best.

Vajrād api kaṭhorāṇi mṛdūni kusumād api /
Lokottarāṇām cetāmsi ko hi vijñātum arhati //42

Inscrutable are the minds of the superior among men, harder than diamond, softer than flower !

Thus the Vedic outline of Śunaśśepa having been saved from Death by the grace of the gods has developed into an elaborate narrative which has come to embody so much of mundane matter like the longing of a childless man contrasted with the despair of a prolific parent with a hundred (and one) sons, half of them recalcitrant, contrasted, again, with the helplessness of an indigent parent who is prepared in lieu of a hundred kine to surrender a son to be sacrificed at the altar, poverty painfully exaggerated to the extent of even the names being ugly and unbecoming : Śunaśśepa, Śunaḥpuccha, Śunolāṅgūla, the age-long principle and process of changing over to a different family (adoption), withal, the joy of having a son, the Light of this and the other world, finally, the glorification of the sacrifice, the bounteous dakṣiṇā not excluded.

(2) The Śāṅkhāyana Śrauta Sūtra repeats the legend as found in the AB, but for a few changes which are of no consequence. There are a number of verbal differences, such as are natural to dittography.

(a) According to AB Rohita finds Ajigarta in the sixth year of wandering, in the Śrauta Sūtra, in the seventh year. The benefits of wandering recited every-time by the disguised Indra communicating new ideas are lacking here ; it is almost

a repetition of the verse of the sixth peregrination :

Caran vai madhu vindatyapacinvan parūṣakam /
Uttiṣṭhan vindate śriyam na niṣat kiñcanāvatī //⁴³

“Wandering he obtains honey, wandering the sweet berry, rising he obtains wealth, sitting nothing at all.” Whereas, in the previous verse, the reference to the Sun’s example gave a thrilling finish to the dictum of travel :

Caran vai madhu vindati caran svādum udumbaram /
Sūryasya paśya śremāṇam yo na tandrayate caran///⁴⁴

“Wandering he obtains honey, wandering the sweet figs, witness the pre-eminence of the Sun who, wandering, never tires.”

(b) Secondly, Ajigarta is represented as eating the son when Rohita accosted him : So’jigartam Sauyavasim ṛṣim aśanāyāparitam putram bhakṣamāṇam aranyam upeyāya /⁴⁵ This should be regarded only as an instance of the moss which inevitably collects as the stream of tradition flows through different mouths.

(c) Thirdly, as soon as he was set free, Śunaśśepa sees the “aṇjassava” according to Śāṅkhāyana, whereas he does so in the Aitareya after a magnanimous invitation from the high priests :

tam ṛtvija ūcus tvameva no’syāhnas samsthām
adhigacchetyatha haitam Śunaśśepo’ṇjassavam dadarśa //⁴⁶

IV

VEDIC ANCILLARIES

(1) The Nirukta

Yāska does not deal with the Śunaśśepa legend nor does he comment on any of the Śunaśśepa verses of the RV. There is however a reference⁴⁷ to his being sold for price, in illustration of the practice of selling boys and girls. Discussing the question of inheritance, it is said that both the son and daughter have a right to it. Manu also supported the view.⁴⁸ But some do not favour the daughter ;

43. Śāṅkh. ŚS. Hillebrandt’s edition (Bibliotheca Indica) 1888. Vol. I, p. 191.

44. Already quoted n. 33 supra.

45. Śāṅkh ŚS. p. 191.

46. AB 7.18.

47. Nir. 3.4.

48. A viśeṣeṇa putrāṇām dāyā bhavati dhārmataḥ /
mithunānām visargādaḥ mānus Svāyambhuvō’bravīt //

Note—the quotation is not traced to its source. The śloka is accented in Sarup’s edition (1927, text only). Bombay Venkatesvara Press edn. does not accent it, though Durga’s commentary accents the pratika thereof. BSS Edn. (Bhadrakamkar) follows suit ; Ānandāśrama. The statement is, clearly, made by Manu, son of Svayambhū, at the beginning of creation (visargādaḥ), whereas we are in the Age of Manu Vaivasvata ! Hence Yāska continues—

na duhitara ityeke / ‘tasmāt pumān dāyādo’dāyādā stri’ / iti vijñāyate / ‘tasmāt striyam jātām parāsyanti na pumāmsam / iti ca // Striṇām dānavikrayātisargā vidyante na pumsaḥ / pumso’pityeke / Śaunaśśepe darśanāt / abhrātṛmativāda ityaparam //

for she is cast off as soon as born, not the son. Moreover, with regard to women, they are given away, sold or abandoned; not so with regard to men. Here it is pointed out that these three actions relate to men also as in the case of Śunaśśepa (Śaunaśśepe darśanāt). The discussion concludes that a brotherless daughter has a claim for inheritance. The whole crux lies in the interpretation of RV 3.31.1, which is outside our purview.

Referring thus to the fact of Śunaśśepa being sold for price, Yāska adds support to the Aitareya version to that extent.

Commenting on the illustration provided by Śunaśśepa, Skanda and Maheśvara explain the giving away (dāna) in the words of the AB 'anena tvā yajā' (Hariścandra to Varuṇa), the bargain in Rohita's words to Hariścandra 'aṇena ātmānam niṣkrīṇā,' the abandonment also is told— 'atisargo'pi Viśvāmitreṇa kṛtaḥ śrūyate jyāyāmsō Madhucchandasaḥ, asamañjasaś ca Sagareṇa/ (jyāyāmsō ityasya sthāne jyāyaso iti pāṭha ucitaḥ/ Ed. Sarup).⁴⁹ We may somehow make it out that those who were elder to Madhucchandas were abandoned by Viśvāmitra. But the celebrated commentator Durgācārya says in the same context : tathā ca parityāgo'pi dṛṣṭaḥ yathā Viśvāmitreṇa Madhucchanda ādinām/⁵⁰ Evidently, Durga is led by the version of the Rāmāyaṇa, according to which the sons of Viśvāmitra became as recalcitrant as the command itself was ruinous, the command being that all of them should offer themselves as victims at Ambariṣa's sacrifice for the sake of Śunaśśepa. They were cursed and abandoned.⁵¹

Under Nirukta II 13 relating to the synonyms of the sun and the sky, Yāska says—

Athāpi Varuṇasyaikasya / 'āthā vayām Āditya vratē tavā'. This is the third line of the famous Varuṇa prayer "Uduttamam" (RV 1.24.15) already considered in the previous pages. Both commentators Skanda-Maheśvara (joint authors) and Durga explain the full text of the verse referring to the fact of Śunaśśepa pronouncing it at the sacrifice. Skanda-Maheśvara, however, add an alternative comment on behalf of the etymologists (nairuktapakṣe tu), which purports to the philosophic implications of the stanza.⁵² It implores Varuṇa to liberate one from the bonds of sin committed in the three stages of life, boyhood, manhood and oldage. This is significant if it is supported by tradition, without depending upon mere fancy, for the AB has put the mantra into the mouth of the victim Śunaśśepa.

49. Skandaswāmin and Maheśvara on the Nirukta Ed. L. Sarup Vol. II (1931), p. 128, also fn. 16 on the same page.

50. Bombay Venkatesvara Press Edn. p. 180 (1912). Sarup's, quoted above, p. 84 'Śunaśśepo yūpe baddho Varuṇam āha,' whereas Durga : 'anayā triṣṭubhā upākṛtaś Śunaśśepo Varuṇam stutavān,' which is incorrect according to AB. Skanda is accurate.

51. cf. Keith's remarks : RV Br. Tr. (HOS. 25) p. 64 f. and p. 307. Rāmāyaṇa 1.62.10,11.

52. Ibid. Sarup, p. 84.

(2) The Bṛhaddevatā

The Bṛhaddevatā does not contribute much to the historical study of the legend. Thrice, in different contexts, the name of Śunaśśepa occurs in the text, twice in the introductory portion and once while describing the gods of the Ṛgveda (1.24-30).

- (a) Namaskāraś Śunaśśepe namaste astu Vidyute /
(Saṅkalpayannidam tulyo'ham syāmiti yaducyete) // BD 1.54.

The author is illustrating several technical expressions⁵³ like stuti, praśamsā, nindā, samśaya etc. and among them namaskāra and saṅkalpa. These latter are defined and examples given in this stanza. Namaskāra or homage is illustrated in the Śunaśśepa formula *i.e.* 1.27.13.

Nāmo mahādbhyo nāmo arbhakébhyo
nāmo yúvabhyo nāma āśinébhyaḥ /
yājāma devān yādi śaknāvāma
mā jyayāsaś śāmsamā vṛkṣi devāḥ //⁵⁴

- (b) The second reference is in connection with the order of words, which should be understood according to sense :

Śunaśśepam narāśamsam dyāvā naḥ pṛthivī ca /
Niraskṛteti prabhṛtiṣvarthādāsīt kramo yathā //⁵⁵

In the Saṁhitā sometimes these words are used differently *e.g.* Śunaś ciccēpam (5.2.7), narā vā śāmsam (10.64.3), dyāvā naḥ pṛthivī ca (2.41.20) should be read as Śunaśśepam cit, dyāvā-pṛthivī naḥ, etc. The proper order of words in such cases should be determined by the sense conveyed by the context.

- (c) When enumerating the deities of the Śunaśśepa hymns so-called, BD says—

Stūyamānaś śaśvad iti pṛitas tu manasā dadau/
Śunaśśepāya divyam tu ratham sarvam hiraṇmayam // BD 3.103.

“ Being praised with the stanza ‘ Śaśvad Indraḥ ’ (RV 1.30.16), Indra, pleased at heart, bestowed upon Śunaśśepa a celestial chariot all made of gold.”

Here probably Śunaśśepa the Seer is meant and not the poor victim of Hariś-candra's sacrifice. Yāska does not give more details of the legend except the slender thread pointing to Śunaśśepa's being sold for price.

Śaunaka, author of the Bṛhaddevatā, follows his example and refers only to Indra's gift of the golden chariot to Śunaśśepa, which need not necessarily be on

53. BD 1.33-40.

54. A very popular mantra used on all occasions of addressing an assembly at domestic functions. Śunaśśepa, bound to the stakes, is believed to address the Viśvedevas with this stanza (AB).

55. BD 2.115.

the occasion of his life's ordeal.⁵⁶ If the incident really belonged to the famous sacrifice, Indra, who was *manasā pritaḥ*, should have ordered his release at once. It is not advisable to hypothesize, but, may it be that Yāska and Śaunaka, both of them accredited exponents of the Veda, did not much regard the colourful tapestry of the Aitareya? After all, the legend was the outcome of the Yājñika School; the Nairuktas had their own opinions in the matter.

(3) The Sarvānukramaṇi of Kātyāyana

This work affords good support to the Aitareya version. Śunaśśepa is here described as the son of Ājigarta and the adopted son of Viśvāmitra, being given by the gods, ājigartih Śunaśśepaḥ sa kṛtrimo Vaiśvāmित्रो देवारताḥ.⁵⁷ Hariścandra's concern in the affair is dubious. Kātyāyana, while indexing RV 1.28, says: Yatra grāvā nava śaṇuṣṭubādi yaccidhy aulūkhalyau pare mausalyau ca prajā-pater Hariścandrasyāntyā carmapraśaṃsā vā/⁵⁸ The idea is that the last verse is of Hariścandra i.e. he is the deity thereof. The BD has Soma instead.⁵⁹ But Devatānukramaṇi states that the last verse praises Prajāpati Hariścandra or the carma: 'Prajāpatim Hariścandram carma vāntyā praśaṃsati.'⁶⁰ AB however contemplates it to be a praise of Soma. Who is this Hariścandra? Considering the meaning of the verse,

Take out the remaining Soma-juice from the tray, pour it on the strainer and collect the same in the cow's hide.⁶¹

it is difficult to see which Hariścandra is to be connected with it. Lacking in relevancy, it matters little whether it is Hariścandra the sacrificing king or Prajāpati himself with the name Hariścandra. The verse is in the form of instruction from one priest to another priest or an assistant; and it seems perfectly natural for Śunaśśepa to say it after he had pressed the Soma in a novel but quick process (aṅjassava). According to the accepted principle 'liṅgoktadevatā,' Soma must be the deity. Whatever it is, it should be noted that so far as the development of the story is concerned, the Sarvānukramaṇi has yielded to the Hariścandra complex and admitted him into the legend's orbit.

(4) Vāsiṣṭha Dharmasāstra

This work⁶² which is stated to be one of the four most ancient works on Hindu Law includes Śunaśśepa among the various kinds of sons. They are classified

56. This observation is happily supported by Ṣaḍguruśiṣya. Ref. Sarvā. P. 85 v. 14, please see infra n. 69.

57. Macdonell, Sarvā pp. 6-7.

58. Ibid.

59. BD 3.101 and M's notes.

60. Quotation by Ṣaḍguruśiṣya. Sarvā p.87, cf. commentator's remarks.

61. RV 1.28.9. Ūcheṣṭām camvor bhara sōmam pavitra ā srja / Nīdhehi gōrādhi tvaci/

62. Ed. A. A. Führer, Bombay Sanskrit Series XXIII (1930) p. 50 Mm. P. V. Kane assigns the work tentatively to a period between 300 and 100 B.C. He opines further that it is later than Gautama, Āpastamba and Baudhāyana. See History of Dharmasāstra, Vol. I, BORI, 1930, p.59.

into twelve,⁶³ six of whom are entitled to inheritance and the other six not entitled. Among the latter category, Śunaśśepa is mentioned as an instance of two kinds *viz.* kṛita and svayamupāgata : a son who is bought for price and 'a son who approaches by himself'.

“ athādāyādabandhūnām sahoḍha eva prathamah / yā garbhiṇī samskriyate sahoḍhaḥ putro bhavati / dattako dvitīyah / yam mātāpitarau dadyātām / kṛitas tṛtīyah / tacchunaśśepena vyākhyātām / svayamupāgataś caturthaḥ / tacchunaśśepena vyākhyātām /

Śunaśśepo vai yūpe niyukto devatās tuṣṭāva / tasyeha devatāḥ pāśam mumucus tam ṛtvija ūcuḥ / mamaivāyam putro'stṛiti tām ha na sampade / te sampādayāmāsuḥ / eṣa eva yam kāmāyet tasya putro'stṛiti / tasya ha Viśvāmitro hotāśīt tasya putratvam iyāyā //

According to AB, as soon as the añjaśśava is over, Śunaśśepa himself goes and sits on the lap of Viśvāmitra as son. There is no reference to the discussion among the ṛtviks themselves to have him as son each for himself, though Sāyaṇa amplifies the situation with this explanation. When Ajigarta began to press his son to come back, Viśvāmitra of course invites him to join his family only. It is not incorrect to call Śunaśśepa as a svayamupāgata son. Though Vasiṣṭha's Law did not entitle the son for any inheritance, he being an adāyādabandhu, Viśvāmitra out of sweet will and special favour conferred upon Śunaśśepa his entire property, earthly and divine. Was not Vasiṣṭha, the author of this code, a friend of Viśvāmitra? We shall deal with this problem in the next chapter.

V

LATER EXPONENTS OF THE VEDA

(1) Śaḍguruśiṣya

Śaḍguruśiṣya who wrote and finished his commentary on Kātyāyana's Sarvānukramaṇī in 1187 A.D.⁶⁴ closely follows the Aitareya version of the Legend. Inspired with its workmanship, Śaḍguruśiṣya all at once got into a poetical vein and narrated the story in the form of verse ;⁶⁵ it is a small canto of 22 stanzas. A few minor differences are inevitable in the relay. Seeing Ajigarta desirous of killing him, Śunaśśepa addressed him 'wait, I shall hasten to the gods (for protection)'—

Yūpe baddhaḥ Śunaśśepo jighāmsuṃ pitaram tataḥ /
ūce tiṣṭhāham evānyā upadhāvāmi devatāḥ //⁶⁶

In the Aitareya, Śunaśśepa never addresses him. He saw him coming with the knife and, in consternation that they would actually cut him up, soliloquises

63. Dvādaśa ityeva putrāḥ purāṇadrṣṭāḥ / They are svayamutpādita, kṣetraja, putrikā paunarbhava, kāṇina, gūḍhotpanna, sahoḍha, dattaka, kṛita, svayamupāgata, apavidḍha, and śūdrāputra. Ibid. pp. 49-50.

64. Macdonell's preface to Sarvā p. v.

65. Ibid. p. xx.

66. Sarvā, p. 85 verse 12.

‘hantāham devatā upadhāvāmi’⁶⁷ —alas, I shall hasten to the gods. Ajigrata must have looked a veritable fiend and it is not unnatural that Śunaśśepa must have at once screamed ‘stop’!

Another departure, which is an improvement on the original is that he prayed, in the course of his appeal to the gods, to Indra, as well, who had already become his patron by bestowing a golden chariot upon him, well pleased with his praise—

Indram ca pūrvavyāpārasamprāptastutisupriyam /
Hiraṇmayarathasyāpi svasmai dātāram eva ca///⁶⁸

This makes it clear that the gift of the golden chariot was an earlier event. An apparent incongruity is removed by this view, because when Śunaśśepa was begging for his life the giving of a chariot—may be of gold—is but a travesty of his exalted position. This we have pointed out in the last section.⁶⁹ Secondly, it reveals that Śunaśśepa was himself a Ṛṣi and a favourite singer, a fact which lends support to the hypothesis that all the series of 7 hymns attributed to him were irrelevant for the occasion and that it was the handiwork of the Aitareya to weave them all into a web to suit its own purpose.

(2) Sāyaṇa

Though so much was written by Sāyaṇa in the shape of commentary to the hymns of the Veda, as well as to the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, he has not said anything which would contribute to the historical study of the legend. In the RV, rather contrary to his wont, he does not even narrate the story in his own words. He adheres to the task of quoting his authorities, chief of whom is Kātyāyana, while introducing every sūkta and also specific verses when necessary. In this case, he quotes from the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa also, a work on which he wrote his own commentary. When the authorities differed from one another, he faithfully reproduces all of them : *e.g.* the discussion⁷⁰ about the devatā of RV 1.28.9, wherein he quotes all the sources.

“ucchiṣṭam ityasyāḥ Hariścandrādhiṣavaṇacarmasomānām anyatamo devatā.”

It may be remembered that the Bṛhaddevatā provided the alternative between adhiṣavaṇacarma and soma ; whereas the Sarvānukramaṇi following the Devatānukramaṇi considered Hariścandra as the deity. The best thing for Sāyaṇa was of course to record all the evidence and leave it at that which he has done.

(3) Dyā Dviveda

Dyā Dviveda’s Nītimañjarī (written 1494 A.D.) is only a replica of the picture given by the older authors, in this case, Kātyāyana, Ṣaḍguruśiṣya and Sāyaṇa.

67. AB 7.16.

68. Sarvā, p. 85 verse 14.

69. Supra n. 56.

70. Supra p.

From the first-mentioned authority the author quotes the index ; from the second, the poetical narrative, and from the third the explanation of the R̥gvedic mantras.⁷¹

The main purpose of Dyā is however to illustrate certain ethical maxims from the Vedic events. It was elsewhere observed that our author has not performed well in that respect. His dicta are unimpressive and his examples open to question. Śunaśśepa provides the ground for this observation : Pitarau vandyau ityāha—

Pitarau hi sadā vandyau na tyajed aparādhinau /
Pitrā baddhaḥ Śunaśśepo yayāce pitṛdarśanam //⁷²

‘Parents always deserve respect ; they should not be forsaken though guilty. Bound by the very father, Śunaśśepa begged for a sight of the father (parents).’

The R̥gvedic verse quoted in support is the famous ‘kaśya nūnām’ (I.24.1) which ends with ‘pitāram ca drśyam mātāram ca,’ which is the refrain of the next verse also. Enough has been said above to show at once that such moralisations do not at all appeal. In the present case, the interpretation of the last line of the R̥gvedic verse just quoted, as conceived by Dyā is far from convincing. In fact, it is wrong ; Śunaśśepa could not and did not wish to see once again the parents who gave him birth. He was longing, on the other hand, to find on this earth, real affectionate parents. He found them, indeed, in Viśvāmitra.

Another lesson. Devānām api stutiḥ priyetyāha—

Aiśvaryaparipūrṇo’pi dadyāt stutyāpi cepsitam /
Śunaśśepāya sauvarṇam ratham Indrah stuto dadau //⁷³

‘A man endowed with riches, being praised, should give what is desired ; Indra, being praised, gave a golden chariot to Śunaśśepa’.

The moral, unfortunately, is not couched in clear terms. The versification reminds one of the proverbial versifiers of Bhoja’s Court.⁷⁴ Suffice it to say, that both the lesson and the example lack the pithiness or the ‘sting’, which is the very soul of an epigram.

Before concluding this section, it must be observed, with a sense of surprise also that these veteran writers have not been drawn away by the Epic and Purāṇic versions of the legend. Their business was however specific, that is only to explain a given text. It is perfectly tactful and necessary for the commentator to confine himself to his province. But how could the great epics, specially the Rāmāyaṇa (which gives a different version of the story), and the Purāṇas like the Bhāgavata withhold their influence on these learned savants ? They were able to visualise a discipline which was more than fifteen centuries old in their time. The Epics

71. He has mentioned other authorities as well viz. Āśvalāyana ŚS., the R̥g-vidhāna etc. They are commonplace.

72. Nitimañjarī (Benares Edition) p. 20. v. 11.

73. Ibid. p. 24 V. 12. The R̥gvedic verse in support is 1.30.10.

74. Bhojanam dehi rājendra ghr̥tasūpasamanvitam / (Kālidāsa concluded the labours of these born poets !) Māhiṣam ca śaraccandracandrikādhavalam dadhi //.

and Purāṇas surely belonged to later periods, perhaps the early centuries of the Christian era. And seeing the other end of knowledge which was fourteen-fold (caturdaśa vidyāh) was every man's goal in those times. The matter deserves some thought.

VI

RĀMĀYAṆA

The Rāmāyaṇa⁷⁵ records the Śunaśśepa legend in a very different form. The story is related by the sage Śatānanda, son of Gautama, to Śrī Rāma at a sacrifice which king Janaka was celebrating at Mithilā and to which Viśvāmitra took Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to witness the great occasion. The guests were accorded a most respectful welcome by the King. After exchanging courtesies, Janaka's principal priest Śatānanda was pleased to hear of Rāma's visit to the hermitage of his revered father Gautama and of the redemption of the mother, Ahalyā who was under a curse. This happy event was due to the favour of Viśvāmitra who brought Rāma along. Naturally Śatānanda was overwhelmed with affection and regard for the young prince and a sense of gratitude to Viśvāmitra, the universal friend. This prompted him to recount all the great deeds of Viśvāmitra before the Prince, who listened with wonder and admiration. Śunaśśepa's deliverance was one of the series.

Once upon a time Viśvāmitra was practising severe penance at the Puṣkara in the western regions of our country. At the same time king Ambariṣa of Ayodhyā started a sacrifice. The victim (paśu) was carried away by Indra, causing a serious breach in the performance. The priest accused the king of carelessness and, in atonement, proposed that either the stolen victim should be recovered or a human victim secured instead. The king made an elaborate search all over the country, towns and forests and even the holy hermitages. He was prepared to buy a human being paying a huge ransom, if such should be available. At length on the heights of the Bhṛgu mountain, he met the great sage Rēika seated with his wife and sons. He applied to him for one of his sons in lieu of a hundred thousand kine. The father said he was unwilling to part with the eldest son and the mother declined to let go the youngest, her darling Śunaka. Thereupon, Śunaśśepa, the middle one, himself said 'Father says the eldest is not for sale, and mother says the youngest is not for sale; the middle one is meant for sale, I think. So, Prince, take me'. Ambariṣa was delighted, gave away crores of gold and heaps of precious stones, along with a hundred thousand kine, and went away with Śunaśśepa mounted on his chariot.⁷⁶

75. Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki. Edition—Nirṇayasāgara Press, Bombay, with Commentary Tilaka (1930).

76. Here ends canto 61, from which relevant portions are quoted hereunder :

Etasminneva kāle tu Ayodhyādhīpatir mahān
Ambariṣa iti khyāto yaṣṭum samupacakrame / 5
Tasya vai yajamānasya paśum Indro jahāra ha
Praṇaṣṭe tu paśau vipro rājānam idam abravīt / 6

At noon, the party halted at the Puṣkara for rest. There Śunaśśepa saw his maternal uncle Viśvāmitra engaged in penance, along with other sages. With sorrowful face, thirsty and exhausted, he fell at the sage's feet and appealed for succour in pathetic terms. Consoling him in so many words, the great sage Viśvāmitra, an ocean of kindness, commanded his sons to offer themselves as victims at king Ambariṣa's sacrifice instead of Śunaśśepa. Then the sons, Madhucchandasa and others retorted "How do you forsake, O Sire, your own sons to save another man's son? We think it is improper like dog's flesh in the dish." Furious at this disobedient reply, Viśvāmitra cursed the sons for a thousand years of life on earth eating dog's flesh like the sons of Vasiṣṭha. Turning round to the pitiful Śunaśśepa, he instructed him "When you are bound to the holy yūpa by means of thread after being decked with red garlands and unguents, just address Agni and sing two songs (gāthās). You will succeed." He taught him the gāthās. Śunaśśepa having learnt them with due attention went pleased and urged Ambariṣa to resume the journey. So they reached the capital. With the consent of the

Paśur abhyāhr̥to rājan prañastā tava durnayāt
Arakṣitāram rājānam ghnanti doṣā nareśvara / 7
Prāyaścittam mahaddhyetan naram vā puruṣarṣabha
Ānayaśva paśum śighram yāvat karma pravartate / 8
Upādhyāyavacaś śrutvā sa rājā puruṣarṣabhaḥ
Anvīyeṣa mahābuddhiḥ paśum gobhiḥ sahasraśaḥ / 9
Deśān janapadāms tāms tān nagarāṇi vanāni ca
Āśramāṇi ca puṇyāni mārgamāṇo mahīpatiḥ / 10
Sa putrasahitam tāta sabhāryam Raghunandana
Bhṛgutuṅge samāsinam Ṛcikam sandadarśa ha / 11
Tam uvāca mahātejāḥ prāṇamābhiprasādy ca
Maharṣim tapasā dīptam rājārṣir amitaprabhaḥ / 12
Prṣṭvā sarvatra kuśalam Ṛcikam tam idam vacaḥ
Gavām śatasahasreṇa vikrīṇiṣe sutam yadi / 13
Paśor arthe mahābhūga kṛtakṛtyo'smi Bhūrgava
Sarve parigatā deśā yajñīyam na labhe paśum / 14
Dātum arhasi mūlyena sutam ekam ito mama
Evaṃ ukto mahātejā Ṛkikas tvabravid vacaḥ / 15
Nāham jyeṣṭham naraśreṣṭha vikrīṇīyām kathaṇca
Ṛcikasya vacaś śrutvā teṣām mātā mahātmanām / 16
Uvāca naraśārdūlam Ambariṣam idam vacaḥ
Avikreyam sutam jyeṣṭham bhagavān āha bhārgavaḥ / 17
Mamāpi dayitam viddhi kanīṣṭham Śunakam prabho
Tasmāt kaniyasam putram na dāsyē tava pārthiva / 18
Prāyeṇa hi naraśreṣṭha jyeṣṭhāḥ pitṛsu vallabhāḥ
Mātṛnām ca kaniyāmsas tasmād rakṣye kaniyasam / 19
Uktavākye munau tasmīn munipatnyām tathaiva ca
Śunaśśepas svayam Rāma madhyamo vākyam abravīt / 20
Pitā jyeṣṭham avikreyam mātā cāha kaniyasam
Vikreyam madhyamam manye rājaputra nayaśva mām / 21
Attha rājā mahābāhur vākyānte brahmavādinah
Hiraṇyasya suvarṇasya koṭibhi ratnarāśibhiḥ / 22
Gavām śatasahasreṇa Śunaśśepam nareśvarah
Grhītvā paramaprito jagāma Raghunandana / 23
Ambariṣas tu rājārṣi ratham āropya satvarah
Śunaśśepam mahātejā jagāmāṣu mahāyaśaḥ / 24

members of the sacrificial Sadas, the victim was purified, adorned with red cloth and tied to the post. Thus bound, Śunaśśepa praised in exquisite terms the two gods Indra and his brother (Viṣṇu) as already instructed. The thousand-eyed one was pleased with this intimate appeal and granted him long life. The sacrifice was duly concluded and king Ambariṣa derived manifold benefit by the grace of Indra. And Viśvāmitra continued his penance at the Puṣkara for ten hundred years.

Thus we see that the Rāmāyaṇa appears to represent a tradition which differs much from the Aitareya. Whereas in the latter, king Hariścandra, on account of his son Rohita, tried to sacrifice in order to appease Varuṇa's anger, Śunaśśepa son of Ajigarta, here in the Rāmāyaṇa king Ambariṣa, on account of the sacrificial victim being stolen by Indra, tries to sacrifice, in general propitiation of the gods, Śunaśśepa, son of Reika. In the one, Viśvāmitra is not related to Śunaśśepa and

Canto 62

Śunaśśepam naraśreṣṭha gṛhītvā tu mahāyaśāḥ
Vyaśramat Puṣkare rājā madhyāhne Raghunandana / 1
Tasya viśramamāṇasya Śunaśśepo mahāyaśāḥ
Puṣkaram jyeṣṭham āgamy Viśvāmitram dadarśa ha / 2
Tapyantam ṛṣibhis sārḍham mātulam paramāturaḥ
Viṣaṇṇavadano dinas tṛṣṇayā ca śrameṇa ca / 3
Papātāṅke mune Rāma vākyam cedam uvāca ha
Na me'sti mātā na pitā jñatayo bāndhāvāḥ kutah / 4
Trātum arhasi mām saumya dharmeṇa munipuṅgava
Trātā tvam hi naraśreṣṭha sarveṣāṃ tvam hi bhāvaṇaḥ / 5
Rājā ca kṛtakāryas syād aham dīrghāyur avyayaḥ
Svargalokam upāśniyām tapas taptvā hyanuttamam / 6
Sa me nātho hyanāthasya bhava bhavyena cetasā
Piteva putram dharmātman trātum arhasi kilbiṣāt / 7
Tasya tadvacanam śrutvā Viśvāmitro mahātapāḥ
Sāntvayitvā bahuvīdham putrān idam uvāca ha / 8
Yatkrte pitarāḥ putrān janayanti śubhārthinaḥ
Paralokahitārthāya tasya kāloyam āgataḥ / 9
Ayam munisuto bālo mattaḥ śaraṇam icchati
Aya jīvitamātreṇa priyam kuruta putrakāḥ / 10
Sarve suktakarmāṇaḥ sarve dharmaparāyaṇāḥ
Paśubhūtā narendrasya tṛptim agneḥ prayacchata / 11
Nāthavāmś ca Śunaśśepo yajñas cāvighnato bhavet
Devatās tarpitās ca syur maina cūpi kṛtam vacaḥ / 12
Munes tad vacanam śrutvā Madhucchandādayas sūtāḥ
Sābhimānam naraśreṣṭha salilam idam abruvan / 13
Katham ātmasutān hitvā trāyase'nyasutam vibho
Akāryam iva paśyāmaḥ śvamāmsam iva bhojane / 14
Teṣāṃ tad vacanam śrutvā putrāṇām munipuṅgavaḥ
Krodhasamraktanayano vyāhartum upacakrame / 15
Nissādhvasam idam proktam dharmādapi vigarhitam
Atikramya tu madvākyam dāruṇam romaharṣaṇam / 16
Śvamāmsabhojinas sarve Vāsiṣṭhā iva jātiṣu
Pūrṇam varṣasahasram tu pṛthivyām anuvatsyatha / 17
Kṛtvā śāpasamāyuktān putrān munivaras tadā
Śunaśśepam uvācārtam kṛtvā rakṣām nirāmāyām / 18

comes on the scene only at the sacrifice as one of the officiating priests: in the other, Viśvāmitra is the maternal uncle of Śunaśśepa and enters the story even before the sacrifice but does not attend it; he also teaches him two gāthās whose recitation at the proper time will prevent his death. The revolt and degradation of the sons also precede the sacrifice in the Rāmāyaṇa, while the same occurred after in the Aitareya. Of 101 sons, 51 of whom Madhucchandās was leader, obeyed the father's command to accept Śunaśśepa's primogeniture. But in the Rāmāyaṇa all the sons,⁷⁷ even the good Madhucchandās were concerned in the revolt and its consequences; and what was the command which was disobeyed? It was that in order to save one soul *i.e.* Śunaśśepa's, all the sons should offer themselves as victims at the sacrifice. Ajigarta sold Śunaśśepa, as he was driven to the pitch by his indigence, but R̥ika seems to have had enough and to spare, he must have made up his mind to spare a son also out of deference to the wishes of the great king who came to the door for help. The Aitareya depicts Śunaśśepa as the god-given son of Viśvāmitra, who adopted him into his family, formally also giving him the privileges of the first born. We saw how this fitted into the Vedic tradition in a wider application of the term. The Rāmāyaṇa provides no indication of what happened to Śunaśśepa afterwards. Perhaps he went to penance as he expressed himself when he sought Viśvāmitra's help (I.62.6).

This section cannot be concluded without referring to some far-reaching differences in reading—and therefore, in import—between the Bombay edition of the Rāmāyaṇa and that brought out by the Italian scholar G. Gorresio in 1843-67 (Bengal Recension).

Pavitrāpāśair ābaddho raktamālyānulepanah
 Vaiṣṇavam yūpam āsādyā vāgbhir agnim udāhara / 19
 Ime ca gāthe dve divye gāyethā muniputraka
 Ambariṣasya yajñe'smin tatasiddhim avāpsyasi / 20
 Śunaśśepo gr̥hītvā te dve gāthe susamāhitah
 Tvarayā rājasimham tam Ambariṣam uvāca ha / 21
 Rājasimha mahābuddhe śighram gacchāvahe vayam
 Nivartayasva rājendra dikṣām ca samudāhara / 22
 Tadvākyam ṛṣiputrasya śrutvā haṛṣasamanvitah
 Jagāma nṛpatīś śighram yajñavāṭam atandritah / 23
 Sadasyānumate rājā pavitrakṛtalakṣaṇam
 Paśum raktāmbaram kṛtvā yūpe tam samabandhayat / 24
 Sa baddho vāgbhir agryābhir abhitsuṣṭāva vai surau
 Indram Indrānujam caiva yathāvan muniputrakah / 25
 Tatah prītas Sahasrākṣo rahasyastutitoṣitah
 Dirgham āyus tadā prādāt Śunaśśepāya vāsavaḥ / 26
 Sa ca rājā naraśreṣṭha yajñasya ca samāptavān
 Phalam bahugunam Rāma sahasrākṣaprasādajam / 27
 Viśvāmitro'pi dharmātmā bhūyas tepe mahātapāḥ
 Puṣkareṣu naraśreṣṭha daśavarṣasātāni ca / 28

77. Compare Keith's remarks on p. 64 of his *Rig-Veda Brāhmanas Translated* (HOS Vol. 25, 1920). He says if the gāthās introduced by the AB are taken by themselves there is no question of division among the sons. The division into first fifty as one group and the second fifty with the midmost Madhucchandās as leader of the other group is, in his opinion, perhaps, the handiwork of the Aitareya. There is some sense in this, at any rate, because Madhucchandās of R̥gvedic fame is exonerated.

(a) It is said that Ambariṣa was out to perform a human sacrifice and Indra carried away the victim :

“Tasya vai yajamānasya *naramedhena* bhūpateḥ
Prokṣitam mantravad yūpāt paśum Indro jahāra tam /”

1.63.6⁷⁸

The Bombay edition does not specify which paśu it was, but the priest says ‘Search for the stolen paśu or bring a human victim instead’. (See Com. Tilaka on this portion).⁷⁹

(b) Ambariṣa finds R̥eika with his many sons, residing in a homestead, but poor :

“Anveṣamāṇas so’paśyat R̥eikam nāma Rāghava
Bahuputram daridram ca dvijam gṛhanivāsinam ” /

Ibid. 12.

But our R̥eika is a maharṣi, dazzling with penance, accompanied by wife and sons on the heights of the Bhṛgu mountain (1.61.11,12 text quoted above in a footnote).

(c) The revolt of the sons is expressed in different terms :

“Katham ātmasutān hitvā trātā parasutān asi
Bhagavan kāryametate te svamāmsasyeva bhakṣaṇam ” /

1.64.14

The difference is only between *sva-māmsa* and *śva-māmsa* ! It is just possible that *śva-māmsa* ‘dog’s flesh’ is meant, not ‘own (*sva*) flesh’. The confusion between *s* and *ś* in Bengali pronunciation is understandable. Cf. *śāntvayitvā* for *sāntvayitvā*. The *Vāsiṣṭhas* were cursed to eat dog’s flesh. There also *Gorresio* reads as *svamāmsa*.⁸⁰ The degradation was, from Vedic times, attached to eating dog’s flesh. The great sage *Vāmadeva* famished by hunger cooked the entrails of a dog.⁸¹ It is common parlance to call a shabby fellow as *śvapaca*. In the *Purāṇas* we meet with references which say that in times of famine the condition of some of these sages was so straitened that the whole family subsisted on dog’s flesh :⁸² The matter did not call for such discussion had not the alternative been most tragic and verily, unthinkable—eating one’s own flesh and yet living !⁸³

78. The two cantos here are 63 and 64, whereas in the Bombay Edition, they are 61 and 62. Verbal differences in reading are numerous, but only those that indicate a factual change have been considered. The first kāṇḍa is called *Ādikāṇḍa* whereas we are familiar with the name *Bālakāṇḍa*. *Gorresio* spells *Sunaśśepa* with a *pha*.

79. *Abhyāhrta* idānim asmābhir ānītaḥ paśus tava durnayāt tvatpāpavaśāt tāvakarakṣiṇām pramādāt ca praṇaṣṭa ityanvayaḥ / Tilaka com. on *Rāmāyaṇa* 1.61.7 (Bombay).

80. *Gorresio* 1.61.20, 64.16-17.

81. RV 4.18.13.

82. cf. *Mbh. Śānti*. 5330 ff. quoted by Muir OST I p. 375 f.

83. But compare *Rām* 7.77-78 (Bombay, 1930) about the god (*Śveta*) who was cursed to eat his own flesh.

(d) Viśvāmitra imparts to Śunaśśepa a mantra, praising Indra, which he should mutter when sprinkled with holy water, before the actual sacrifice :

“Yadā paśutve putra tvam proksitaḥ syās tadā japeḥ
Imam mantram mayā proktam Indrābhīṣṭavasamyutam” /
Ibid. 19.

Later,

Sa baddha ṛgbhis tuṣṭāva devendram harivāhanam
Bhāgārthinam anuprāptam svareṇocair vinādayan /
Ibid. 25.

Śunaśśepa praised Indra with verses from the Ṛgveda. According to our text, Viśvāmitra provided rakṣā first *i.e.* by chanting some spells and then taught him two gāthās. The instruction was, also, that he should first address himself to Agni, which fact peculiarly corresponds with the Vedic version. First he ran to Prajāpati (ka) and then to Agni, later on to Indra.^{83A} Varuṇa the real god concerned is neglected by either version. Some scholars⁸⁴ attach much importance that, according to Gorresio, Viśvāmitra taught Śunaśśepa only *one* mantra, whereas in the Bombay book it is *two* gāthās. It is not necessarily one stanza only, because, later in the same text, the reference is amplified as ‘ṛgbhis tuṣṭāva’ *i.e.* praised with several verses from the Ṛgveda. The same may apply to the two gāthās. Let us remember that the AB puts 97 verses into the victim’s mouth and make him knock at the door of this, that and every god !

VII

MAHĀBHĀRATA

(1) The Anuśāsana-parva of the Mahābhārata describes the exploits of Viśvāmitra in these words : deliverance of Śunaśśepa was, of course, one of them—

Ṛcikasyātmajaś caiva Śunaśśepo mahātapāḥ
Vimokṣito mahāsatrāt paśutām apyupāgataḥ /
Hariścandrakratau devāms toṣayitvātmatejasā
Putratām anusamprāpto Viśvāmitrasya dhīmataḥ /
Nābhivādayate jyeṣṭham Devarātam narādhipa
Putrāḥ pañcāśad evāpi śaptāḥ śvapacatām gatāḥ /⁸⁵

A man of great austerities, Śunaśśepa, son of Ṛcika, was liberated (by Viśvāmitra) from the sacrifice, though bound as the victim. And he, in that sacrifice performed by Hariścandra, pleased the gods by his own brilliance and became the son of the wise Viśvāmitra. But the fifty sons all of them, would not greet Devarāta (Śunaśśepa) as the eldest and, hence, were cursed to the state of cooking dog’s flesh.

83A. AB VII.6, RV 1.24.1 and 2.

84. Festschrift Prof. Kane (1941) p. 306 n. 8 (Mr. H. G. Narahari).

85. Mbh. 18 (Anuśāsana) 8.6-8. Citraśālā Press, Poona 1933, with Commentary Bhārata-bhāvadīpa of Nilakaṇṭha Caturdhara,

This account lands us in some confusion. It is difficult to say which exactly is responsible for this, whether the foregoing story given in the Rām. or the one from the Mbh. just recapitulated. The relative ages of the two epics are admittedly hard to determine. A period covering centuries, during which the epics might have taken their present shape only, has been postulated. Thus, according to Winternitz, "between the 4th century B.C. and the 4th century A.D. the transformation of the epic Mahābhārata into our present compilation took place, probably gradually...Small alterations and additions still continued to be made however even in later centuries. One date of the Mahābhārata does not exist at all, but the date of every part must be determined on its own account."⁸⁶ Concluding the discussion on the age of Rām., Winternitz says: "The whole Rāmāyaṇa, including the later portions was already an old and famous work when the Mahābhārata had not yet attained its present form. It is probable that the Rāmāyaṇa had its present extent and contents as early as towards the close of the 2nd century A.D. The older nucleus of the Mahābhārata, is probably older than the ancient Rāmāyaṇa...It is probable that the original Rāmāyaṇa was composed in the third century B.C. by Vālmiki on the basis of ancient ballads."⁸⁷ What was said of the Mbh., that the date of every part must be determined on its own account, well applies to the Rām. also. For in the first place, the first and the seventh books of the latter viz. the Bāla. and Uttara kāṇḍas respectively are accepted as later additions, and even in the Bāla kāṇḍa, the story of R̥ṣyaśṛṅga, the exploits of Viśvāmitra the account of the dwarf incarnation of Viṣṇu, the descent of the Ganges, the churning of the ocean etc.—are all agglutinative in character. Special care therefore becomes necessary to fix the relative chronology of those legends which are common to both the epics. All theorisations are perforce tentative until critical editions of both works, after the fashion of the BORI Mahābhārata,⁸⁸ are made available. Ignorance, wanton or otherwise, of this important factor would result

86. Winternitz HIL p. 475 (1927).

87. Ibid. pp. 516-517.

88. It is well-known how this stupendous undertaking by the BORI has succeeded in pushing though about half of the Great Epic. The work is published upto the end of Bhīṣma parva. This crowning glory of critical scholarship in India was achieved by the late Dr. Viṣṇu Sitārām Sukthankar, who by dint of vision and dynamic activity enunciated the principles of textual criticism and evolved a perfect process of manuscript collation and editorial collaboration. For full seventeen years he was so deep in the Mbh. which was to him a universe by itself, that he had unconsciously attained sublime identification (Sārūpya) with Mahārṣi Vyāsa when, at the end of his memorable, but, alas, portentous preface, he recalled

Ūrdhvaśāhur viraumyeṣa na ca kaś cicchṛṇoti mām
Dharmād arthaś ca kāmāś ca sa kimartham na sevyate //

"Across the reverberating corridors of Time, we, his descendants heard his clarion call to Duty." Such was his realisation:

A critical edition of the Rāmāyaṇa has been promised by Dr. Raghu Vira (p. 390 Sukthankar Memorial Edition, Vol.1, Critical Studies in the Mahābhārata, 1944). When the two critical editions are in hand, a historical and comparative study of the legends will be placed on a secure basis. At present we have to be satisfied with the comparative aspect only not the historical, as far as it is possible.

in very fallacious conclusions. A few instances have been convincingly described by the late Dr. Sukthankar in his *Epic Studies VIII* which is a text-critical essay on the *Rāmopākhyāna*, occurring in the *Āraṇyaka-parva*. Professors Jacobi and Oldenberg have been proved to be victims of hasty generalisations based on passages of uncertain veracity.⁸⁹

In the light of the above remarks, some observations of a purely comparative nature, not stressing on chronological sequence, may be recorded. Taking shelter under Winternitz's conclusion that the present text of the *Rām.* was a fact at the close of 2nd century A.D., while *Mbh.* attained that state by the 4th, apart from the immemorial tradition of *Rām.* being the First Poem (*ādikāvya*) that was composed, the section on *Rām.* has been placed earlier.

Now to come back to the story of *Śunaśśepa*. *Śunaśśepa* is the son of *Reika* : this is a point common to both *Rām.* and *Mbh.* The sacrifice is undertaken by *Hariscandra* : this is one with the *Aitareya*. *Viśvāmitra*'s sons were fifty only and all of them were cursed (*Mbh.*). *Rām* also says similarly though, however, it does not exactly estimate his prolific achievements. *AB* credits him with a hundred and one, of whom the first fifty were cursed.

It is to be observed that the narration of *Viśvāmitra*'s deeds, which were so many, was the main purpose of the *Mbh.* context. Therefore the *Śunaśśepa* incident is given in bare outline. If the poet had entered into details, there should have been a clearer rendering, so that we could discern a harmonious trend.

(2) *Harivaṁśa*—This work is regarded as part of the *Mahābhārata*, but outside the pale of the traditional 18 parvans. It is a kind of appendix (*khila* or *pariśiṣṭa*) for the great epic, which was a convenient and accommodating receptacle for all lore of the country. With regard to such works it is not a useful attempt to scrutinize the authenticity or genuineness of this portion or that ; nor is it useful to determine the age or date of their composition. They are intended for the edification of the common folk on whose minds, only the narrated events exert an influence rather than the academic aspects of date and authorship. In such a swollen stream of legendary matter, as the *Mahābhārata*, currents and cross currents, pools and whirlpools pass muster, and the inquirer runs the risk of being caught and lost amidst them. Here is an example :

The *Śunaśśepa* story given in the *Harivaṁśa*, which is the nineteenth parva so to say, is so incoherent with that told in the *Anuśāsana* which is the thirteenth parva. Says the *Harivaṁśa*⁹⁰—

Viśvāmitrātmajānām tu Śunaśśepo'grajaḥ smṛtaḥ /
Bhārgavaḥ Kauśikatvam hi prāptaḥ sa munisattamaḥ /

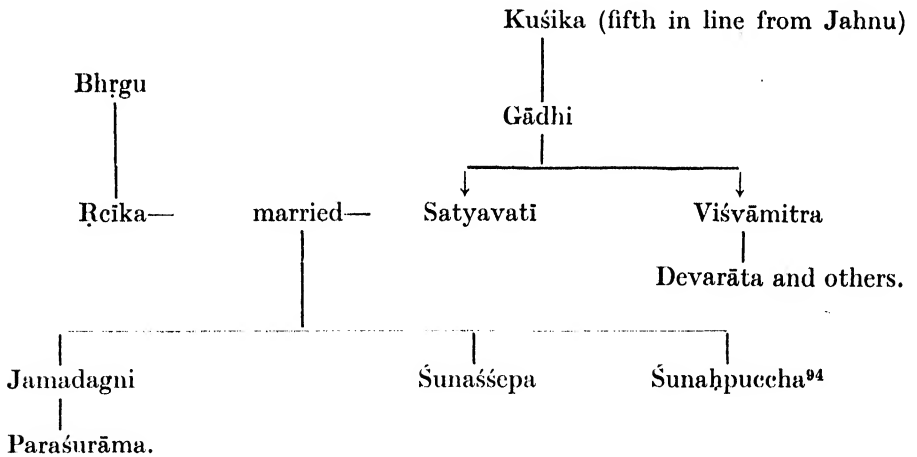
89. *SME* Vol. 1, (1944), pp. 388 f, fn. 4 on p. 389.

90. *Citraśālā* Edn. (Poona) 1.27.54b—58a.

Viśvāmitrasya putras tu Śunaśśepo'bhavat kila /
 Haridaśvasya yajñe tu paśutve viniyojitaḥ /
 Devair dattaḥ sa vai yasmāt Devarātas tato'bhavat /
 Devarātādayas sapta Viśvāmitrasya vai sutāḥ /
 Dṛṣadvatisutaś cāpi Viśvāmitrāt tathāṣṭakaḥ /

Among Viśvāmitra's sons, Śunaśśepa is considered as the first-born, and thereby that sage who was a Bhārgava, descended from Bhṛgu, attained the position of a Kauśika. It happened this way that at the sacrifice instituted by Haridaśva,⁹¹ Śunaśśepa had been yoked as a paśu; then he became Viśvāmitra's son, for, the gods (having granted life to the victim) made him over to Viśvāmitra. Hence he got the name Devarāta (god-given). Devarāta and others are seven sons⁹² of Viśvāmitra, and through Dṛṣadvati also a son called Aṣṭaka.

Śunaśśepa's pedigree is also different, it is an interesting revelation. He was the sage Ṛcika's son all right, and the middle one too, but placed between Jamadagni the elder and Śunaḥpuccha⁹³ the younger brother: The chapter under review gives the whole genealogy, consistent in itself—



King Gādhī gave his daughter Satyavati in marriage to Ṛcika, son of Bhṛgu. Ṛcika was pleased with his wife and prepared the holy caru for the sake of a son

91. This is neither Hariścandra (AB), nor Ambariṣa (Rām.):

92. Viśvāmitra's sons defy all attempts at enumeration! Book to book the number changes ranging from 7 to 101. In this very chapter (Hari. 1.27) the sum of seven is mentioned but the list comes up in all to 14 at least. That he was a prolific parent is acknowledged everywhere. Mbh. 13.4 counts 62 sons. Nilakaṇṭha on v. 60.

93. No Śuno-lāṅgūla here contrary to AB, where Ś-puccha is the eldest and Ś-lāṅgūla the youngest. See next note.

94. For the genealogy and the following narrative ref. Hari. 1.27. 12-85, and further (41-42 Ibid.)—

Aurvasyaivam Ṛcikasya Satyavatyām mahāyaśāḥ /
 Jamadagnis tapovīryāj jajñe brahmadevān varāḥ /
 Madhyamaś ca Śunaśśepaḥ Śunaḥpucchaḥ kaniṣṭhakaḥ /

to himself and also one to his father-in-law Gādhi on request. Both parts of the caru, he handed to his wife Satyavati pointing out which she should take and which her mother. Somehow at the time of partaking the sacred viands, the mother gave away her portion to the daughter. As Satyavati conceived, Ṛeika, by divine instinct, discovered the mistake. In his dispensation, the caru that was meant for the mother-in-law was to produce a strong and valiant son, invincible and conquering all Kṣatriyas, and that for his wife was to produce a most eminent sage, wise in thought and serene in temperament. That was just right. But fate turned the tables.⁹⁵ Satyavati was sad, because she at all events preferred a saintly son to a redoubtable warrior; such a one was fitting for her father who was a king. Therefore she begged her consort, the sage Ṛeika to change the progeny even then, for what is it that is impossible for a divine sage who can make and unmake things? She proposed an alternative also lest she should offend her revered husband—‘Confer upon me a saintly son only; if inevitable, let his son be of the warrior kind’. Ṛeika was moved by his beloved’s fervent prayer and at once granted it. Thus was born the sage Jamadagni.⁹⁶ As the result of the other portion of the sacred caru, the sage Viśvāmitra was born.⁹⁷ But how to reconcile the legend of Ṛeika having three sons of whom Śunaśśepa was the middle one? The author of the Harivaṁśa, whoever it is, simply appended that series of three brothers to this illustrious Bhṛgu line substituting Jamadagni’s name for the eldest!⁹⁸ We have occasion to say elsewhere that except the name of Śunaśśepa, the series of Śuna-names are spurious. At any rate the latter do not fit in with the context. We may at worst resort to the convenient theory of several persons of the same name. The Ṛeikas are different, the father of a Jamadagni and the brother-in-law of a Viśvāmitra being poles apart from the Ṛeika who sold a son for price.

VIII

PURĀṆAS

(1) *Brāhma*

This Purāṇa⁹⁹ is always stated first in the list of eighteen mahā-purāṇas and hence sometimes called Ādi-Purāṇa. Looking into the contents, however, it is

95. The story is related in Mbh. 13.4 with slight elaboration here and there. The change of caru was due to the mischief of Satyavati’s mother who did not scruple to play fraud on her own daughter.

96. Ibid. 35

Tataḥ Satyavatī putram janayāmāsa Bhārgavam /
Tapasyabhiratam dāntam Jamadagnim śamātmakam /

97. Ibid. 42 f.

Viśvāmitram tu dāyādam Gādhiḥ Kuśikanandanah /
Janayāmāsa putram tu tapovidyāśamātmakam /
Prāpya brahmarṣisamatām yo’yam saptarṣitām gataḥ /

98. Compare Winternitz’s remarks on p. 443. HIL Vol. 1, regarding the genuineness of the work.

99. In this section the Purāṇas are considered in the order in which they are dealt with by Winternitz. HIL p. 531 The earlier Purāṇas must have, according to the Professor, come into being before the 7th century A.D. (p. 525). This always rules out the interpolations which are a menace to a systematic appreciation of the Purāṇas.

revealed that only a very small portion of it could be called ancient. Glorification of several holy places on the Ganges is a special feature of this Purāṇa.

The Śunaśśepa legend¹⁰⁰ is described in the Gautamī-māhātmya (chs. 70-175), which is a glorification of the sacred places on the Ganges. Sages Nārada and Parvata once visited the Ikṣvāku king Hariścandra. Wondering as to why all creatures under creation hanker after progeny, the king sought enlightenment at their hands, being himself childless. They replied suitably and advised him : "Go to the sacred Gautamī (holy place) and worship Varuṇa. He will grant your wish." The king obeyed, Varuṇa pleased by his worship, granted his request on condition that he would sacrifice to him the very son that would be born. Hariścandra agreed and returned to the capital. But after the child was actually born, the king was so overwhelmed with paternal love that he, almost in the manner related in AB, put off discharging his duty by the God. At last the young Prince, Rohita, was sixteen and fit to be Crown Prince, when Varuṇa came for the last time and insisted on his due. The king summoned the Prince in the presence of ministers and priests and told him all the history of his birth and the imminent sacrifice. But the youth sharply retorted : "Wait, I shall first sacrifice to Viṣṇu, Lord of the Worlds, with Varuṇa as paśu (victim), the priests shall help me in this."¹⁰¹ Varuṇa was enraged and cursed the king with dropsy. Rohita went to the forest; five years elapsed and during the sixth, Rohita came to the same holy spot on the Ganges where his father had worshipped Varuṇa. There he met Ajigarta, son of sage Vayas,¹⁰² followed by wife and three sons. Getting acquainted with him in a casual manner, he bargained for Śunaśśepa in lieu of a thousand cows, besides grain, gold and cloth. Rohita then went to the father and told him to offer to Varuṇa the sage's son who was bought for price. Then, what is strange, Hariścandra refused to sacrifice the brāhmaṇa : "Having made them (Brāhmaṇas) victims, I am not anxious to live a pitiful life. It is not fair, death is preferable to making the twice-born a sacrificial victim. Go therefore, my son, happily with the Brāhmaṇa." At this time was heard the Voice from Heaven : "O king of kings go to the sacred Gautamī with Rohita, the priests and with the son of the Brāhmaṇa. There celebrate the sacrifice *without killing Śunaśśepa*, and the sacrifice will still be complete."

100. Brahma-Purāṇa. ĀnSS. No. 28 (1895) ch. 104 (pp. 246-295) and ch. 150 (p. 361 f.)

101. Rohita uvāca—Aham pūrvam mahārāja rtvigbhis sapurohitah / Viṣṇave lokanāthāya yakṣye'ham tvritam śuciḥ / Paśunā Varuṇenātha tad anujñātum arhasi / Ibid. Ch. 104 st. 38. The sarcasm behind 'paśunā' is irresistible !

102. 'Rṣes tu Vayasah sutam'. According to Vedic texts he is 'Sauyavasi' i.e. son of Sūyavas. How patent the error in text-transmission or of legendary tradition ! It could easily be 'Rṣes sūyavasas sutam'. No. v.l. for the Purāṇa reading. But a later chapter (150) has Suyavasyātmajo loke' jigartiriti viśrutah ; the line may point to the name being 'Suyavasya' taking the whole as a compound. There is a v.l. 'suyajñasyātmajo' in this context. Illustrative of Purāṇic license if not vagary is that the name Ajigarta is here Ajigarti twice after final e and o (Sk. 86) with initial a elided, and finally (four times) as simply Jigarti, the initial a being dropped perhaps on the analogy of Bhāguri's Law.

Then the king repaired to the banks of the Ganges with the priest Vasiṣṭha, the sages Viśvāmitra and Vāmadeva. The sacrifice was performed in regular manner. At the proper time, Viśvāmitra addressed the Assembly and the Gods. "Pray, permit all of you, the gods severally to whom he as oblation is due (to be sacrificed),—permit this Śunaśśepa (to be free). Foremost of the Vipras, may he bathe in the sacred Gautamī and offer prayer to the gods, whereby they shall be pleased." With the approval of the assembly, Śunaśśepa bathed in the sacred river and praised the gods who declared: "This sacrifice is complete without killing Śunaśśepa." (kratuḥ pūrṇo bhavatyēṣaḥ Śunaśśepavadham vinā). Varuṇa was specially pleased. Viśvāmitra honoured Śunaśśepa before the Assembly and adopted him as his son and made him the eldest, taking precedence over his other sons. Those who did not accept his priority were cursed and those who acquiesced were blessed. All this happened on the south bank of the Gautamī. Innumerable are the holy places (8014) thereat,¹⁰³ they being named after Hariścandra, Śunaśśepa, Viśvāmitra, Rohita and so on.

This Purāṇa in a later chapter (150) describes how in another tīrtha called Paisāca, a vipra was freed from a ghostly existence. That vipra is no other than our Ajigarta (or Jigarti as the text transforms him), who merited that punishment because he sold his middle son Śunaśśepa to a Kṣatriya for being sacrificed. During life, he suffered severe illness, after death was subjected to untold punishments in Hell and finally was turned into a ghost. Śunaśśepa once, while passing that way, heard a deep groaning sound, on tracing which he was told by the ghost, the miserable punishment it was fated to suffer. Śunaśśepa was stricken with sorrow, bathed in the Gautamī and offered watery oblation¹⁰⁴ to the father (pitṛ). Ajigrata was absolved of the sin and ascended heaven.

While this account of the Brahma Purāṇa corresponds in all significant details with the AB, the deliverance of Śunaśśepa is effected in a peculiar manner. This poetical innovation is natural to an age which looked upon sacrifices, particularly the human sacrifice, with horror. The sacrificial age had been substituted by an age which believed in washing off all sins in the holy waters of the Ganges. So all stories naturally converge into this doctrine which appealed to the common people whose outlook, with time and tide, had totally changed. Ajigarta's redemption is, of course, a novelty.

(2) *Vāyu Purāṇa*

The version of the Śunaśśepa story given here¹⁰⁵ fully accords with that given in Harivaṃśa,¹⁰⁶ but for the substitution of Haridaśva for Hariścandra which,

103. ityādyasṭasahasrāṇi tīrthānyatha caturdaśa /

104. For the moment, the Purāṇa does not mind the incongruity of Śunaśśepa offering tarpaṇa for one who was no longer father to him !

105. BI ed. Mitra (1888) Vol. II, ch. 29 st. 89-92.

106. But Narahari that VP follows Mbh. It was more proper to say Vāyu Purāṇa and Harivaṃśa bear all identity except the name Haridaśva, which is but oversight on the part of the author of Harivaṃśa. A look into the original texts and the accompanying conspectus will convince.

clearly, is an oversight. Most of the verses are common to both. It is not easy to say which of the two was the borrower. Vāyu Purāṇa is assigned to an age¹⁰⁷ earlier than the celebrated Bāna (early 7th cent.), who heard the Purāṇa read to him, and later than the Gupta period (4th and 5th cent.) which is described in the Purāṇic text. Which then is the date of Harivaṁśa which is a complement to the Mahābhārata? As already remarked quite a wide period of time has been suggested i.e. 4th cent. B.C. to 4th cent. A.D., during which the Great Epic of India took shape so as to comprehend 'the present extent, contents and character'. Even then, allowance must be given for small alterations and additions which continued to be made in later centuries. It will be nearer truth if we think that both Vāyu Purāṇa and Harivaṁśa owe to a common source, may be in this case Mahābhārata.

(3) *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*

This Purāṇa¹⁰⁸ which is ascribed to the 10th cent. A.D. by Winternitz¹⁰⁹ and to the 9th by C. V. Vaidya and others, narrates the Śunaśśepa legend in two contexts. The first part of it up to his deliverance from the stakes is related in connection with Hariścandropākhyāna,¹¹⁰ as the sacrifice was celebrated under the ægis of that king. The second part viz. his adoption into the Viśvāmitra family is narrated in what is called Paraśurāmopākhyāna.¹¹¹ The story of Viśvāmitra comes there naturally as the two heroes Paraśurāma and Viśvāmitra are closely related as members of one family. For as shown in the previous section (see genealogical table), Paraśurāma's grandmother Satyavati is Viśvāmitra's sister.

The two narrations put together fully and accurately reproduce the version of AB, the difference being only in the vehicle of expression. The Brāhmaṇa is a mixture of Vedic prose and the gāthā while the Purāṇa is entirely in the śloka; still, there is so much of verbal correspondence that it is only fair to say that the author of the Purāṇa has rewritten the AB in the form of verse, with the ancient text acutally before him.¹¹² But one change, and that for the better perhaps,

107. Winternitz HIL 1, pp. 553-554.

108. Ed. Eugene Burnouf (Paris 1847). A beautiful but incomplete edition. Only nine skandhas have been published in three volumes. Burnouf's valuable introduction to the Bhāgavata Purāṇa has been profusely quoted by scholars. He is highly praised by Max Müller as a great teacher. It was inspiration derived from this savant that prompted M.M. to conceive, undertake and bring out the famous edition of the R̥gveda with Sāyaṇa's commentary. The closing paragraph of M.M.'s preface to the second volume of the first edition reveals both the teacher and the pupil. "When I heard of his death," M.M. records, "I felt—and I believe that many engaged in similar studies shared the feeling—as if our work had lost much of its charm and its purpose. 'What will Burnouf say?' was my earliest thought, on completing the first volume of the R̥gveda. And now, as I am finishing the second, in its turn submitted to the judgment of so many scholars whose friendship I value and whose learning I admire, my thoughts turn again to him who is no longer among us, and I think, not without sadness, of what his judgment would have been." 1853, pp. xl-xli of Vol. I, Second Edition, 1890. Gorresio, Roth, Goldstücker, M. M. and several others were fellow-students under Burnouf.

109. Winternitz. HIL (Calcutta Univ. 1927) Vol. I, p. 556, and n. 3 same page.

110. Ed. Burnouf. Vol. III, Skandha IX, ch. 7 vv. 6-25.

111. Ibid. ch. 16 vv. 28-36.

112. Ch. XVI vv. 33-36 are repetition of the AB text almost verbatim.

may be noticed. Indra who was pleased with the sacrifice gave the golden chariot to Hariścandra, and not to Śunaśśepa as told in the AB. That it is a weak spot in the Aitareya construction has already been discussed.¹¹³ The Bhāgavata adds support to the view.¹¹⁴

(4) *Devī Bhāgavata*

The claim of this work to be classed among the eighteen main Purāṇas has not been granted,¹¹⁵ perhaps reasonably, judging from the prolixity of its style and nauseam, not to speak of the kind of subject-matter which marks the extreme into which a narrator's license can carry. The Śunaśśepākhyāna is here told in no less than 4 chapters¹¹⁶ making a total of 239 ślokas. One feature is that in the bare outline it has not much strayed from the ancient source the Aitareya. The personalities are almost all the same, the motifs are the same. But the haltings at every step to elaborate a detail with unbridled fantasy have rendered the narrative heavy, sometimes the serenity of the story has been rudely disturbed, so much so that it verges on absurdity *e.g.* Hariścandra's bargaining with Varuṇa and the behaviour of this august divinity of the Veda, Supreme Lord of Law and Order, as depicted in this work, provide more of amusement than of high ideals like a stern sense of duty by the God or by the ancestors. The conversations¹¹⁷ between the king and the God remind one of a bargaining in which the common folk indulge. To give another instance, when the sacrifice was afoot¹¹⁸ with Śunaśśepa bound to the stakes, it is neither tragedy nor a holy sacrifice that the book describes. The sacrifice converts itself into a rabble and a melodrama. For a historical study of the legend, however, the work provides valuable material. It illustrates the part the narrator's fancy plays in the growth or transformation of a legend. And, as such works are composed for the sake of readers or listeners, they easily betray the level of culture and the standard of taste which the people had attained or to which they had descended. Now a few details.

(a) Hariścandra does penance on the banks of the Ganges to appease Varuṇa, by the advice of Vasiṣṭha, his family priest. That Nārada did not appear in such a recent work is rather strange.

113. See *supra* section 3.

114. Tataḥ puruṣamedhena Hariścandro mahāyāśaḥ
Muktodaro'yajad devān Varuṇādin mahatkathāḥ / 20
Viśvāmitro'bhavat tasmin hotā cādhvaryur ātmavān
Jamadagnir abhūd Brahmā Vasiṣṭho'yāsyas sāmagaḥ / 21
Tasmai tuṣto dadāvindrah śātakumbhamayam ratham
Śunaśśephasya mātmyam upariṣṭāt pravakṣyate / 22.

Compare Pārgiter's remarks on p. 63 JRAS. 1917.

115. Winternitz HIL Vol. I (Calcutta), p. 555.

116. Devī-Bhāgavata (Poona edn. with Marāṭhi tr.) Skandha VII chs. 14-17, whereas the Rām. devotes 2 cantos with 48 ślokas on the whole. Mbh. (3), Hari (6), Bhāg (25) and VP (4).

117. The whole of ch. 15. Ibid.

118. Ch. 16.23-59, 17.1-88. Ibid.

(b) After the birth of the child, the king's manner of dodging the god is somewhat different. Each time Varuṇa is put off, the period of advantage gained is more ; the arguments are quite ingenious but not high in taste. Thus after the birth of a child the father is purified in ten days but the mother is fit for rites, only after a month ; so the God was put off for one month. Then the teeth should appear. Then the boy deserves to have his hair-cut (caula). The fourth round is won on the pretext of upanayana (Initiation to Study) and the fifth by samāvartana (Return from Study). On the sixth round, Rohita escaped to the forest even without the knowledge of the father.¹¹⁹ Wrathful at this, Varuṇa cursed the king to suffer from dropsy (jalodara).

(c) Rohita learning of the father's illness wants to return to the capital. But Indra, in the form of an old vipra, advises him to stay away on a most ludicrous argument, unworthy of a god : 'Life is dear to all creatures. On account of life only, the wife and children become dear. In order to protect his life, the king will kill you at the sacrifice and get cured of his illness. Therefore you should not go back to the father's house. When the father is dead, then only you will go for the sake of obtaining the kingdom.¹²⁰ Again and again, the divine lord appeared and prevented Rohita by means of ingenious arguments, from getting back to his place.

(d) Hariścandra goes again to Vasiṣṭha seeking advice as to what to do to cure the illness. He advises : 'Perform sacrifice by means of a son bought for price, then the curse will end'. The king sent the ministers in search of a son to buy. Śunaśśepa was bought off for a hundred cows from Ajigarta who was living in penury.

(e) When the victim was tied to the sacrificial post there was great commotion in the assembly. Śunaśśepa himself was weeping. The Śamitr (the killer of the sacrificial animal) refused to do his duty which was on this occasion too cruel to bear. Ajigarta came forward to perform the act for double the fee. All were struck aghast ; they began to curse Ajigarta :

Pisāco'yam mahāpāpi krūrakarmā dvijākṛtiḥ

Yas tvayam svasutam hantum udyataḥ kulapāmsanaḥ /¹²¹

At this stage Viśvāmitra intervened and pleaded before the king to release the victim, as it was not fair to cut up another body in order to save his own. The king refused to honour his proposal. Then Viśvāmitra went up to Śunaśśepa and taught him the Vāruṇa-mantra which the latter recited with all devotion. Varuṇa was pleased and arrived on the scene. Hariścandra begged his mercy for the whole medley and Varuṇa permitted him to let go the boy.

119. According to AB, Rohita was apprised of the situation in Varuṇa's presence after he became fit to wear armour, upon which, he refused to submit to sacrifice and went away to forest, bow in hand.

120. Ch. 16. 7-9. Ibid.

121. Ch. 16. 34. Ibid.

(f) Now another coloured thread is woven into the texture. The released Śunaśśepa addresses the sacrificial assembly ! ‘ O gentlemen of omniscient knowledge ! whose son am I now ? Who is my father hereafter ? With your verdict, I shall resort to him for protection’.

Putro’ham kasya sarvajñāḥ pitā me ko’grataḥ param
Bhavatām vacanāt tasya śaraṇam pravrajāmyaham /¹²²

The members said : ‘ Of whom else would he be the son, when he is Ajīgarta’s progeny ?’ The sage Vāmadeva : “No.” He was sold for price and the king bought him, so he belongs to the king, undoubtedly. Or, he should belong to Varuṇa, as he released him from the bonds. For, five kinds are the fathers as they say :

Annadātā bhayatrātā tathā vidyāpradaś ca yaḥ
Tathā vittapradaś caiva pañcaite pitarah smṛtāḥ /¹²³

There was a deadlock when the god’s name was brought into competition. But Vasiṣṭha gave a reasonable judgment : “ When the father, devoid of affection, sold the son, he ceased to be that for, he got wealth instead. The king acquired him no doubt, but he forfeited his claim when he offered him to the gods by yoking him to the post, and he has derived benefit also. Nor does Śunaśśepa belong to Varuṇa, who released him only after being pleased with his praise ”. So,

Kauśikasya sutaś cāyam ariṣṭe yena rakṣitaḥ
Mantram datvā mahāvīryam Varuṇasyātisaṅkaṭe /¹²⁴

‘ He becomes the son of Kauśika who saved him from calamity by imparting a powerful mantra in praise of Varuṇa’.¹²⁵ Members of the assembly immediately approved of the decision. Śunaśśepa went over to Viśvāmitra, who held him by the right hand and took him home at once (satvaraḥ). Varuṇa, pleased, went to his abode. And all went to their own houses :¹²⁶

122. 17.22. Ibid.

123. What enumeration ! Five kinds, but only four are stated. The father who begets is the fifth, perhaps. 17.27 ibid.

124. 17.33-34. Ibid.

125. Note Vasiṣṭha’s high regard for Viśvāmitra.

126. Viśvāmitras tu jagrāha tam kare dakṣiṇe tadā
Ehi putra gṛham me tvam ityuktṛvā premapūritaḥ /
Varuṇas tu prasannātmā jagāma ca svamālayam /
Ṛtvijaś ca tathā sabhyāḥ svagṛhān nirayastadā /
17. 36-38

A Conspectus of the Śunaśśepa References

The work	Concerned king	Purpose of	The victim	Substitute	Lineage	The price	Viśvāmitra's part	Gods concerned and other remarks
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
(1) RV	—	—	Śunaśśepa	—	—	—	—	Agni liberated Śunaśśepa from the stakes (RV 5.2.7) Varuṇa released Śunaśśepa from fetters 1.24.12.13.
(2) AB	Hariścandra	for the sake of a son	Rohita	Śunaśśepa	Middle son of starving Ajigarta	Cows 100 100 100	Viś.Hotr priest at the sacrifice ; later as Ś. went over to him, Viś. adopted him into his family as eldest son. First fifty sons declined to recognise and were cursed. Madhucchandās with the other fifty accepted and were blessed.	Prajāpati, Agni, Varuṇa, again Agni, Viśvedevas, Indra, Aśvins and Uṣas were praised in 97 Rk. verses. The chains fell off as Uṣas was praised.
(3) Sarvā.	Hariścandra	No sacrifice is indicated					Śunaśśepa is called Kṛtrima Vaiśvāmitra Devarāta, suggesting Śunaśśepa	Hariścandra's name occurs as an alternative deity of RV 1. 28.9. His

The work	Concerned king	Purpose of	The victim	Substitute	Lineage	The price	Viśvāmitra part	Gods concerned and other remarks
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
							śepa's adoption by Viśvāmitra and also the god's favour to Śunaśśepa and then to Viśvāmitra.	complicity in the sacrifice of Śunaśśepa has to be imagined as AB dates earlier than Sarāv.
(4) Rām.	Ambariṣa	common weal	Not specified. A human being according to Gor. victim carried away by Indra.	Śunaśśepa.	Middle son of R̥cika (not stated as poor (Gor.))	100,000 cows and heaps of precious stones.	Viś. described as uncle. did not attend Sacrifice. But, prior to that, at the puskara, taught two gāthās that secured his release. Sequel like adoption etc. not dealt with.	Indra liberated Śunaśśepa. Varuna not mentioned. All sons, Madhucchandasa etc. were cursed before sacrifice as they refused to substitute for Śunaśśepa.
(5) Mbh.	Hariścandra	not stated	Śunaśśepā of great penance (mahā-tapāḥ)	—	Son of R̥cika	—	Śunaśśepa liberated by Viśvāmitra though a victim at the sacrifice, became his eldest son. All the 50 sons who did not accept were cursed.	Śunaśśepa pleased the gods by his own brilliance (ātmatejasā)

(6)	Hari.	Haridaśva	not stated	Śunaś-śepa	—	Middle son of Rcika ; Jamada agni elder and Śunaḥ-puccha younger brother.	—	Śunaśśepa became the eldest son of Viśvāmitra known as Devārāta.	No reference to cursing the sons. No details.
(7)	Brahma	Hariś-candra	for the sake of a son	Rohita	Śunaś-śepa	Middle son Ajigarta, poor and famished.	1000 of cows grain, gold and cloth.	Viś. attends the sacrifice and addresses the Assembly to pronounce Ś. free. Bath in the River and prayer to Gods. Viś. adopted Ś. as eldest son. Some sons cursed and some blessed.	Varuṇa is prominent. Heavenly Voice-aśariravāk. Vasiṣṭha and Vāmadeva as priests. Sacrifice without killing. Ajigarta's redemption.
(8)	VP	Hariś-candra	not stated	Śunaśśepa	—	exactly same as 6 above. Some repeated.	same as 6 above		No reference to cursing of the sons.
(9)	Bhāg	Hariś-candra	for the sake of a son	Rohita	Śunaśśepa	Middle son of Ajigarta	price not stated.	Viś. Hotṛ at the sacrifice then the adoption as eldest son etc. just as in AB (2) above.	Same as (2) above.

The work	Concerned king	Purpose of	The victim	Substitute	Lineage	The price	Viśvāmitra part	Gods concerned and other remarks
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
(10) Devī Bh.	Hariś-candra	for the sake of a son	Rohita	Śunaśśepa	Middle son of Ajigarta (nirdhana)	cows 100 200	Viś. present at sacrifice, pleads with king for Ś.'s life. On refusal teaches the Varuṇa-mantra. Discussion as to whom Ś. should belong. Opinions divergent. Vasiṣṭha gave verdict in favour of Viś.	Varuna is the god who freed Ś. Vasiṣṭha, family priest, was constantly approached by the king for advice.

127. The works tabulated are : 1. Rgveda (RV), 2. Aitareya Brāhmaṇa (AB), 3. Sarvānukramaṇi (Sarvā). 4. Rāmāyaṇa (Rām). 5. Mahābhārata (Mbh.). 6. Hari-Variṇśa (Hari.). 7. Brahma Purāṇa (Brahma). 8. Vāyu Purāṇa (VP). 9. Bhāgavata (Bhāg.). 10. Devī-Bhāgavata (Devī Bh.).

128. Note—Ś = Śunaśśepa. Viś. = Viśvāmitra.

129. Note—The Nirukta alludes to Śunaśśepa being bought for price in support of the dictum that men are also sold like women. This has been amplified in the Vās Dh. Sūtra (17.30 *et seq*) which records another interesting phase of the story. After Ś. was set free there arose a dispute among the priests as to whose son he should be. He did not respond. Then they said : Let him choose any one he likes. Then Śunaśśepa chose to be son of Viśvāmitra who was the Hotṛ priest. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa, in one sentence (4.7.16), says : The son of Viśvāmitra was Śunaśśepa, originally descendent of Bhrgu, now given by the gods and thence named Devarāta.

REVIEW OF THE CONSPECTUS

A glance at the conspectus will at once show how the various works have deviated from the main current of the story. The incident after all is one, it did not happen to two or more Śunaśśepas, nor did it occur in two or more places. Therefore while employing expressions like version and recension which are almost becoming technical with the advance of critical scholarship, some care requires to be exercised. Should we, for instance, talk of the number of versions of the Śunaśśepa story, ordinarily we shall be obliged to say they are as many as there are works which deal with the legend; because, with each narration, there will be some innovation, wanton or otherwise. Such changes are mere embellishments and are of little consequence regarding the framework. Secondly, the time-factor should also be considered; the distinction of different versions must naturally apply to works which are more or less contemporaneous. With regard to works beyond the range of history the question does not arise, for all are ancient. But a work of the 5th cent. A.D. cannot presume to vie with the ancient Aitareya to propound a different version of the story. Any version after all should be backed up by an element of truth. Flagrant innovations which reflect the pulse of a people or of an age cannot claim the status of versions, indeed. The Brahma Purāṇa, the first-mentioned of all the Purāṇas, for instance, introduces the Invisible Voice (aśarīra-vāk)—‘Do not sacrifice Śunaśśepa; the sacrifice is complete without the immolation’. Śunaśśepa bathes in the Gomati-kṣetra and is absolved of all responsibility by the sacrifice. The motive for this innovation is purely local, that is to glorify the holiness of the Ganges and to signify a revolt against human sacrifice. But can this be designated as a different version? It is not supported by any trend of tradition which touches the hoary past. The Devī Bhāgavata is full of innovations which are introduced to explain, as it were, the different stages of the story. Thus Hariścandra according to AB first asks for 10 days’ time to sacrifice the new born babe, but, the Devī Bhāgavata raises it to one month, for the father is eligible to perform religious rites after 10 days of child-birth, but the mother becomes eligible only after a month! She should accompany the husband in all religious functions, according to the Ordinances. Can this be called a version? Harivaṁśa and Vāyu Purāṇa find themselves in a medley. Having represented the traditional descent of Jamadagni as the son of R̥ika, the author is at a loss to fix up the Śunaśśepa brothers. Fortunately he did not say that Jamadagni was also called Śunaḥpuccha, but simply removed the last man, Śunolāṅgūla, in the ‘seriatim arrangement’! Thus, the brotherhood bears this galaxy—Jamadagni Śunaśśepa and Śunaḥpuccha. Can this be called a version? Similarly, Haridaśva is an unconscious substitute for Hariścandra. When once it entered the holy writ, it was suffered because, perhaps, Haridaśva is a name of the Sun God, from whom the Ikṣvākus were descended. Hariścandra was an Ikṣvāku; hence, there could be reconciliation by regarding the king as Haridaśva *alias* Hariścandra.

Let us consider one other point. In most of the works, the legend is treated *en passant*. The importance given or the interest which attaches to the story may be measured, in a way, by the extent of the description in each. The Aitareya,

owing to its antiquity, may not come into the picture. All the same, it devotes a whole chapter in six khaṇḍas (sections) comprising roughly 55 prose bits and 31 gāthās. Other works allot as follows :

1. Rāmāyaṇa—	48	Ślokas	(2 cantos)
2. Mahābhārata—	3	„	
3. Harivaṁśa—	6	„	(total of two contexts)
4. Brahma Purāṇa—	113	„	(2 chapters)
5. Vāyu Purāṇa—	4	„	
6. Bhāgavata—	25	„	(parts of 2 chapters)
7. Devī Bhāgavata	194	„	(4 chapters)

Of these, Nos. 4, 6 and 7 follow Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, except the narrator's amplifications here and there. The main features are common, as shown in the conspectus. Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 5 show some divergences. One common divergence that really matters is that Śunaśśepa is the son of Ṛcika not of Ajigarta. That is, the family itself is differently stated, for Ṛcika is a Bhārgava, Ajigarta is an Āṅgirasa. While the orthodox school, dating back to the time of the Sarvānukramaṇi and prior still the Arṣānukramaṇi, reaffirms the AB account by assigning Śunaśśepa to the Āṅgirasa family changed to that of Viśvāmitra, the Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata, Harivaṁśa and Vāyu Purāṇa declare him to be a Bhārgava changed into a Vaiśvāmitra. Taking recourse to conjecture only—for no other deduction is possible,—this deviation might have been based on stories current among the populace; it may represent popular tradition in other words. Another point is about the King's name, Ambariṣa in the Rāmāyaṇa; Hariścandra in Mbh. and VP, Haridaśva in Harivaṁśa. We have submitted that Haridaśva might have been an oversight on the part of Harivaṁśa. A similar plea must reconcile the divergence of Rām., as Ambariṣa is nowhere else mentioned as an Ikṣvāku prince. The Ambariṣa of the Mbh. is just an ancient king (Sorensen p. 30), nothing to do with the Ikṣvākus. Curiously, Hariścandra is not stated among the Ikṣvāku princes, whose dynastic list is given in Rām. (1.70). Perhaps our Hariścandra is identical with Ambariṣa. For the present purpose we submit that the difference in names is due to the narrator's whim or ignorance. The dynastic lists presented in the Epics and the Purāṇas are truly confusing and utterly inconsistent with one another.

If, in the light of the above discussion, we come to think of versions at all, they can only be two; one, the orthodox version represented by AB, followed by the Brāhma, Bhāgavata and Devī Bhāgavata; the other, the popular version reflected in the Rām., Mbh., Hari. and VP.

A	The Ṛgvedic Nucleus	B
Orthodox version		Popular version
Aitareya Brāhmaṇa (55+31)		Rāmāyaṇa (48)
Brahma Purāṇa (113)		Mahābhārata (3)
Bhāgavata (25)		Harivaṁśa (6)
Devī Bhāgavata (194)		Vāyu Purāṇa (4)

Works under A, have dealt with the legend at some length and hence admit of correct appreciation. Under B, we can see the summary manner in which the story is disposed of, on the basis of which no inference of certain validity can be drawn. The chief criterion in so grouping them is the likelihood of a popular version concurrent with the orthodox one.

IX

MODERN OPINIONS

The Legend of Śunaśśepa has been a favourite study to many a scholar of recent times. At first it drew attention as a very ancient story so full of human interest. But later scholars like Max Müller and Roth dived deep into their bearings and recorded their impressions a hundred years ago. The former translated the entire piece into English in his history of Ancient Sanskrit Literature¹³⁰ and the latter's critique, with a German translation of the legend, came out in the *Indische Studien*.¹³¹ An exhaustive and invaluable study has since been provided by Keith in his *Rig-veda Brāhmaṇas Translated*.¹³² In the long period of time that divided the two scholars Roth and Keith, the legend continued to be of interest to many, from the point of view of Human Sacrifices in Ancient India. Hillebrandt¹³³ and Eggeling¹³⁴ considered the question deeply. The one believed and the other did not believe in the existence of human sacrifices. Wilson wrote an essay on human sacrifices and John Muir incorporated his impressions in his *Compendium*.¹³⁵

Before dealing with this subject of world-wide interest, we may know how the legend has impressed as a piece of literature. Roth has surmised a more ancient metrical version of the story ;¹³⁶ this inference is evidently based on the fact that certain verses (gāthās) have been interspersed in the narrative, and sometimes the intervening prose appears to patch up the factual detail between two verses. The gāthās are, it is generally agreed, reminiscent of what was most current among the people, and perpetuated in oral transmission from person to person and generation to generation. Regarding the make up of the story, Roth arrived at the following conclusions :

(i) The oldest legend about Śunaśśepa (alluded to in RV 1.24.11-13 and RV 5.2.7) knows only of his miraculous deliverance by divine help from the peril of death.

(ii) This story becomes expanded into a narrative of Śunaśśepa's threatened slaughter as a sacrificial victim and of his deliverance through Viśvāmitra.

130. ASL pp. 408-420.

131. IS 1. 458-464, 2, 112-123.

132. HOS Vol. 25 (1920)

133. *Ritualliteratur*, pp. 153-6

134. SBE XLIV. xli- xlv.

135. OST 1^a pp. 355-360.

136. Weber IL p. 47, Keith (HOS 25) p. 63.

(iii) This immolation-legend becomes severed into two essentially distinct versions,¹³⁷ the oldest forms of which are respectively represented by the stories in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa and the Rāmāyaṇa.

(iv) The latter becomes eventually the predominant one, but its proper central point is no longer the deliverance from immolation but the incorporation of Śunaśśepa, or (with a change of persons) of Ṛeika, into the family of the Kuśikas. It thus becomes in the end a family legend of the race of Viśvāmitra.

There is thus no historical, perhaps not even a genealogical, result to be gained here. On the other hand, the story obtains an important place in the circle of those narratives in which the sacerdotal literature expressed its views regarding the character and agency of Viśvāmitra.¹³⁸

The late Professor Keith, polymath and critic, has analysed the legend thread-bare. It is a piece of work which should serve as an example of critical investigation. Though often oppressive, and never satisfied with the accuracy of things like the proverbial *tārkika*,¹³⁹ Keith as a critic undoubtedly exercised a powerful restraint on the hasty and the fanciful in the Research Forum. It must be said, however, that his writings lacked warmth and sympathy, qualities, for instance, that endeared Max Müller to all classes of the literati.¹⁴⁰

Keith¹⁴¹ notices a threefold structure in the legend comprising (a) the episode of Varuṇa, Hariścandra and Rohita, (b) the episode of Śunaśśepa and Ajigarta (add Rohita to provide the link); and (c) the episode of Viśvāmitra's sons and Śunaśśepa (add, again, Viśvāmitra also). To restate the 'krama'

- (a) Hariścandra—Varuṇa—Rohita,
- (b) Rohita—Ajigarata—Śunaśśepa; and
- (c) Śunaśśepa—Viśvāmitra—Viśvāmitra's sons.

It is pointed out, as already shown by us in the sub-section on RV references, that the RV provides no information whatever about Hariścandra or Rohita or Ajigarta; so, the whole narrative is a later invention. The utilisation of the RV

137. Mr. Narahari concludes his survey of the Legend of Śunaśśepa in Vedic and post-Vedic Literature as follows: "We have thus three recensions of the legend of Śunaśśepa." *Vide* A Volume of Studies in Indology presented to MM. P. V. Kane (1941) p. 307. We are obliged to point out that this is an uncritical statement from all accepted canons of textual criticism. *cf.* the explanations of "Recension and version" in Dr. Katre's Introduction to Indian Textual Criticism" (1941), p. 95. Narahari perhaps meant to say that versions of the story were as many.

138. Rendered by Muir. OST, 1^a p. 359 f.

139. One is reminded of Kṣemendra's compliment to this class of scholars in his *Kavikanṭhā-bharaṇa* (*Kāvya-mālā*), an excellent tract on how to become a poet:

Kurvita sāhityavidas sakāṣe śrutārjanam kāvyasamudbhavāya /
Na tārkikam kevalaśābdikam vā kuryād gurum sūktivikāśavighnam //

140. This aspect was specially stressed in numerous messages of sympathy and love that poured in after the demise of this venerable savant, from Queen to commoner. See *Life and Letters of Max Müller* published by his wife a year after. Vol. II, pp. 419-439. As one review aptly puts it—Max Müller made knowledge agreeable (p. 430).

141. *Rig-Veda Brāhmaṇas Translated* (HOS 25, 1920), pp. 61-68.

verses, hundred in all, must be ascribed 'to a time when it was desired to find recitations for the Hotṛ priest at the Rājasūya in connection with the tale of Śunaśśepa'. Regarding the pre-Brāhmaṇa state of the legend, Keith says, "In the opinion of Roth, the legend grew up into its present content during the period when the collection of the RV was in process of being carried out and it was due to it that the series of hymns in the first book to various deities was ascribed to the authorship of Śunaśśepa. He lays stress on the argument that the argument of the hymns in part depends upon the theory of authorship. On the other hand, in the view of Aufrecht, the authorships ascribed by the Anukramaṇi are compiled from the notices of the Brāhmaṇas and, while this view is not altogether tenable, it would be impossible to come to any definite conclusion regarding the period of growth of the legend from the order of hymns in the Saṁhitā to the attribution to Śunaśśepa of the hymns in question." It must be remembered however that the gāthās that are incorporated in AB presuppose the existence of a constructed popular ballad which marked out not only the saving of Śunaśśepa but also his transfer into the family of Viśvāmitra. Keith is satisfied that "from (AB) vii. 17.3 to the end of the verses it runs as a perfectly simple narrative requiring only the names of the speakers to be supplied to make it clear, just as they are supplied in the epic." But both Roth and Keith do not vouchsafe to the not impossible inclusion of Hariścandra and Rohita in the gāthā version, because the Hariścandra-gāthās (AB 7.13 and 15) are "general in the extreme, and so inappropriate is the exhortation to the king to obtain a son in ch. 13 that it is addressed to Brāhmaṇs...¹⁴² The verses are not chosen out of narrative made up apropos of Hariścandra but are mere general maxims pitted up into a story." But there must be some cause for the sacrifice of Śunaśśepa. Keith is prepared to think: "that may merely have been an ordinary tale of the performance of the human sacrifice and not a tale of the extraordinary and almost ludicrous action of Hariścandra and Nārada. Very probably the two stories of Hariścandra and his son and Śunaśśepa have been allowed to mingle, as they seem to belong to different strata of tradition, the first falling among the many stories of the sacrifice of children among the Semetic and other races, and the latter reproaching the practice of human sacrifice as a custom, perhaps one specially favoured by the Aṅgiras family, which was opposed by other Vedic families." There is no trace of hostility between Vasiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra who appear as Brahman and Hotṛ amicably at the sacrifice. There are traces of the regal character attributed to Viśvāmitra, since the young Śunaśśepa is said to succeed to the lordship of the Jahnu as well as the divine lore of the Gāthinas.¹⁴³

Oldenberg thought that the Śunaśśepa legend as given in AB provided a good instance of the ancient ākhyānas, which are characterised as narratives in prose and verse, the former supplying suitable introductions to or amplifications of the latter. This is not impossible, for even today, the existence of old legends in oral

142. Kim nu malam kim ajinam kimu śmaśrūṇi kim tapah /
Putram brahmāṇa icchadhvam sa vai loko'vadāvadah //
AB 7.13.9.4.

143. PB xxi. 12.2

tradition only, many of them—with all their dialectal liberty, simplicity and homely appeal, would add support to Oldenberg's theory. They are ballads in prose and verse, transmitted with an understandable shyness and reserve among the women-folk only for the ostensible reason that men may laugh at the want of literary polish in it. We imagine, as we witness today, that these ballads have had a continuous tradition from time immemorial. However, Oldenberg was severely criticised and opposed by Keith and the theory rejected, we should dare to confess a feeling, with the latter's *tārkika* instincts¹⁴⁴ coming into full play. It is not that everything in the *Ākhyāna* theory is based on definite evidence and sound judgment. Yet the deep thinker as he visualised a glimmering light in the horizon pushed his way through, tripping here and there owing to darkness. Constructive criticism would strive to enlighten these dark spots and help the distant light to spread itself. Thus while reading in the ancient *Saṁhitā* (RV) the dialogue between Purūravas and Urvaśī, or that between Saramā and the Paṇis it is natural to think of a word of explanation here and there being necessary. The psychological processes in our own minds while understanding the statement and the reply in a dialogue find expression in words, in the *Ākhyāna* so-called. Such might have been provided by the ancient Vedic bards. But Oldenberg went farther than reasonable, of course in enthusiasm, to assert that such explanatory matter once formed regular part of the Veda, since disappeared or lost. Such unnecessary generalisations set the weight of suspicion on the whole edifice and Keith was too quick to let the key-stone gather cement. Taking the AB account itself as a composite narrative, we are unable to see how a status as such cannot be granted to it.¹⁴⁵ Whether reminiscent of the hypothetical *Ākhyāna* of the Veda or not, the AB narrative in itself may, with a certain amount of co-operative thinking, be regarded as an instance of the *Ākhyāna*. Defects are pointed out that the verses of the narrative are loosely linked with the prose and that gnomic verses found elsewhere are worked into it and all that. True, how will all that disprove the main characteristic of a more or less logically sequential mixture of prose and verse? Besides we want to submit that, in the *Ākhyāna*, which, after all reflects a popular character rather than the high-flown literary unities of action, time and place, we do expect some paradoxes, anomalies and flagrant inconsistencies, which in a way—provided they are not absurd—are their peculiar and attractive features.¹⁴⁶ Otherwise how can tradition subsist? How can it survive the ravages of time and clime, if people's fancy did not feed it specially at a time when writing was a problem and printing unknown? This may be another extreme, but a consideration along the line is necessary while appreciating ancient literary traditions which, may it be remembered, are ever more of the people than of the scholar.

144. Keith, JRAS 1911, pp. 979-1009.

145. Vedic literary tradition actually designates it an *ākhyāna*, in the sense of a short story complete in itself. Oldenberg only went to the length of defining it and also superimposing its existence as part of the *Saṁhitā*.

146. Witness for instance the popular version of the Śunaśśepa legend in the *Devī Bhāgavata* or even the more polished yet impossible innovations of the *Brahma*. The process of change is inevitable.

Therefore there is still room enough for Oldenbergs while Keiths are absolutely needed to keep the 'balance of power'!

The Legend of Śunaśśepa has roused considerable interest among scholars, as revealing the prevalence of human sacrifice in Ancient India. Such a view is not unreasonable, for Śunaśśepa was actually bound to the stakes. He was saved, no doubt, by divine grace but the canons do not make provision for that. Human sacrifice under the name *puruṣa-medha* is prescribed by the Śāṅkhāyana Śrauta Sūtra (16.10 f.) and the Vaitana (37.10 ff.). An elaborate ceremony has developed in relation to it, in which, according to the Vājasaneyi Samhitā (30) as many as 184 persons of different denominations and professions have to be offered¹⁴⁷ as sacrifice. It is incredible on the face of it that such a ritual had ever had any practical demonstration. The consensus of opinion is that this human sacrifice was only a theoretical provision in the Sūtras, occasioned, as Keith opines, to remove the anomaly in the omission of man from the list of victims. The use of a man and four other victims is stated as an offering at the piling of the great fire altar. This usage is not actually laid down by any Brāhmaṇa, the most contemplated is the use of the head of a man who has been slain by lightning or by an arrow shot, not a victim killed for the purpose, and normally the head of a goat seems to have sufficed. But it is clearly no sacrifice at all.¹⁴⁸

There is the other world-wide custom of slaying a human being to act as the guardian of the foundations of a building. This is an unwritten and stealthy practice, if at all. It is no human sacrifice in the sense put forth by the Śrauta Sūtras.

Human sacrifice was not uncommon in Greece as we hear stories to the effect. It is revealed that it was widely practised in the age of the Indus Valley Civilisation.¹⁴⁹ Stray incidents are also reported from the Bible.¹⁵⁰ The theory of sacrificing or giving up what is our best or what we love most, in order to please the Almighty Creator, is not without force; it has some appeal to the cultivated mind and much more so to the credulous. The principle of surrender reaches its zenith when we hear a story that Rāvaṇa offered his head to please Śiva, or that Viṣṇu himself, finding a lotus less than a thousand while he worshipped the same God, without hesitation, pulled out his eye and offered at His feet. This kind of immolation has some justification, when it is viewed in a truly philosophic way. But that will not suit the world. The moment it is turned into a cult, it becomes barbarous, hence the universal abhorrence of it. One other point. If ever human sacrifice was contemplated and practised in order to please the Gods, well, the same Gods have recompensed the loss ten-fold. Even in the fables, there is no sacrifice without such compensation which would repair the loss completely. For the

147. Winternitz HIL p.174.

148. Keith RPV, pp. 347-348. Veda of the Black Yajus School Translated (HOS 18 and 19), pp. cxxxvii-cxl.

149. A. P. Karmarkar, Human Sacrifice in Proto-India, ABORI 25 (1944), pp. 112-113.

150. Max Müller in ASL, p. 419.

sake of argument, Rāvaṇa sacrificed the one head but got ten in return and became master of the three worlds. Even so Viṣṇu; the eye was at once restored, and with it he became Supreme Lord of the three worlds. Śunaśśepa was sacrificed for all intents and purposes, the result was—Gods were pleased, Śunaśśepa himself was granted long life and Hariścandra was freed from illness. But when such principles and acts of subtlety and high thinking were canonised, the inevitable result would be brutal executions at dead of night, in mid-forest and amidst ghastly surroundings. Therefore quite early in the history of Man, counteraction expressed itself and to the best of our belief, the Śunaśśepa sacrifice is an instance of an effective protest against such a system, if it ever existed. It is colourfully represented by some that the native dwellers of India before the Aryan advent indulged in it and the Aryans by various means exerted a healthy influence upon them to give up such horrible customs.

X

ON THE NAME ŚUNAŚŚEPA

Śunaśśepa 'dog-tailed' (śuna iva śepo asya), is rather a funny name¹⁵¹ for a Ṛṣi, as he is known to be. He is one of the celebrated Centurion Seers (Śatarciṇs) of the first maṇḍala of RV. He is complimented also as a reputed poet, born in the family of the Aṅgirasas (Āṅgirasō janmanā'syājigartiś śrutaḥ kaviḥ) and yet possessing such an unpoetic name, sets one to think about it. The uncomplimentary if not despicable nature of it has been noticed by every scholar. Some have felt it not inappropriate with his indigent and, judging from later conduct, barbarous parentage.¹⁵² An opinion has been expressed also that though the name relates to a dog and all that, in the time of the Rgveda it did not matter as the dog was not considered a despicable beast at all.¹⁵³ Some kind of endearment was felt or intended when, for instance, Ṛcika's wife, the mother of Śunaśśepa said

Avikreyam sutam jyeṣṭham Bhagavān āha Bhārgavaḥ /
Mamāpi dayitam viddhi kaniṣṭham Śunakam prabho //¹⁵⁴

All the same, the queerness of the name and much more, the queerness of its being one of a synonymous series—Śunaḥpuccha, Śunaśśepa and Śunolāṅgūla—are undeniable. The names are truly artificial; they sound like nick-names.

That these names, as a series, are spurious is countenanced by the Harivaṁśa. While tracing the genealogy of Jamadagni and Viśvāmitra, there was a problem for

151. Amusing names are perhaps the feature of all times and all nations. Compare—Bull, Boot(e), Black, Burns, Baldwin, Butcher, Stone, Dry-den, Piggot, Swineburn etc., corresponding in Kannada—Kempa, Kariya, Guṇḍa, Hucca, Kāḷa, surnames like Teṅginakai or Meṇasinakai etc. Contrast the practice of gods' names only employed by some people, as a rule.

152. cf. Eggeling—SBE XLIV, p. xxxiv et seq., Winternitz HIL 1.218 n. A kind of censure is reflected in the retention of the genitive (aluk) in those names. cf. Pāṇini 6.3.21—“Saṣṭhyā ākroṣe” Vārtika 4 thereon, Śepapucchalāṅgūleṣu śunaḥ samjñāyām.

153. Hopkins—AmJPh. XV 'The Dog in the Rig-Veda' pp. 154-63 (1894).

154. Rām. 1.61.17-18. The suffix *ka* signifies affection as in putraka, bālaka etc., note particularly the diminutive Śunaka from Śunolāṅgūla.

‘Vyāsa’. Jamadagni was the son of R̥ika by Satyavatī daughter of king Gādhi. R̥ika chose to marry the princess whom he loved dearly ; and being pleased with her, prepared the holy *caru* for the sake of progeny. She partook of it and gave birth to Jamadagni. But there was another legend current, relating to a R̥ika who had three sons, the Śuna-brothers, the middle one being Śunaśśepa. So the undaunted author of the Harivaṃśa reconciled the divergence by grafting two of these, as brothers of Jamadagni, the status of the middle one being vouchsafed for Śunaśśepa. This brotherhood *viz.*, Jamadagni, Śunaśśepa and Śunaḥpuccha became more ludicrous than the original combination. In these circumstances, our supposition that there should have been two R̥ikas, stated in the foregoing pages, appears plausible.

That apart, it is sufficiently reasonable to think that the names of Śunaḥpuccha and Śunolāṅgūla are purely imaginary. These two are mentioned for the first time in AB and, only Śāṅkh ŚS, of so many works of Vedic Literature, repeats the names. Later, the Vārttika-kāra conceived a special vārttika comprehending only these three names, as an addendum to the sūtra “*Ṣaṣṭhyā ākrośe*” (6.3.21, SK. 981). That gave these mythical personalities a stamp of reality. Nevertheless, the purpose of the puccha and lāṅgūla has been no more than to provide the madhyama status to Śunaśśepa. The concept of the middle one, incidentally, itself deserves to be questioned on two grounds at least. Firstly it is, psychologically, an unsound and unnatural phenomenon ; for, all children are the same to the parents. The distinction of the eldest and the youngest is an almost mischievous precept promulgated by the old text. Tradition fostered it, though in general, it has never been given to mankind to practise it. Secondly, it has no basis in the Samhitā, nor corroboration in any other work of the Vedic period which could be contemporaneous with it.

Now to the name Śunaśśepa itself. It occurs in the Samhitā thrice as already pointed out (RV 1.24.12,13 ; 5.2.7). Other expressions in the Veda with Śuna prefixed are Śunāpr̥ṣṭha,¹⁵⁵ Śunāhotra,¹⁵⁶ Śunāsira,¹⁵⁷ Śuneṣita.¹⁵⁸ The word śuna itself occurs twelve times,¹⁵⁹ in two forms śunaḥ (thrice) and śunām (nine times). The Tāṇḍya Mahābrāhmaṇa mentions a Śunaskarṇa.¹⁶⁰

155. 7.80.1.

156. 2.18.6 ; 41.14 ; 17.

157. 4.57.5 ; 8. The Nighaṇṭu mentions the word with a double accent as a devatā-dvandva—Śunāsīrā (Nigh. 5.3.34). But in the Samhitā, the word is initially accented—Śunāsira.

158. 8.46.28.

159. Śunaḥ 1.182.4 ; 4.18.13 ; 8.55.3.

Śunām 1.117.18 ; 3.30.22 ; 4.3.11 ; 57.4⁵ ; 8⁴ ; 6.16.4 ; 10.102.8 ; 126.7 ; 160.5. The superimposed figures denote the number of times the word occurs in the same stanza. For the purpose of counting the number of occurrences the whole stanza is taken as one.

160. TB 17.12.6 Śunaskarṇa is the name of a king (mentioned in BŚS also), son of Śibi or of Baṣkiha who performed a certain rite, the Sarvasāra, and so died without disease. VI 2 p. 386. TāB, also called Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa is translated into English by Caland (ASB publication 1931).

Śunāprṣṭha is used as an adjective meaning 'possessed of fine backs' (śobhana-prṣṭha); so also Śūneṣita (analysed as śunā-iṣita) meaning 'drawn or carried along by the dog.'

Śunāsira signifies a dual divinity namely Indra-Vāyu. According to Yāska (Nir. IX.40),¹⁶¹ it is Vāyu and Āditya. Later, the expression signifies two agricultural deities, the personifications probably of 'the share and the plough', as Roth thinks.¹⁶²

Śunāhotra is the name of a Vedic Ṛṣi, father of Ṛṣisamada who is the Seer of the second Maṇḍala. Thrice it has appeared in RV and in loc. pl. only—śunā-hotreṣu. Once interpreted as referring to sacrificial vessels of that designation and twice as referring to the Śunahotras, the members of the Śunahotra family.¹⁶³

Though he does not figure in the Vedic text, we are quite familiar with the versatile Śaunaka under which name Ṛṣisamada is said to be known after he changed over from the Āṅgiras to the Bhṛgu family. In the Bhṛgu family he was adopted as the son of Śunaka.¹⁶⁴ It is however significant that, in the hymns he saw, he styles himself as a Śunahotra.

Now the word śunām¹⁶⁵ in the Veda is one of 20 names of sukha (happiness), sometimes used adverbially also meaning 'happily' (Nigh 3.6.11). Thus the expressions, Śunahotra (one who sacrifices for the sake of happiness), Śunāprṣṭha (the horse which possesses happy, pleasurable, therefore fine backs), Śunaka (the happy man) and Śaunaka (son of the happy man)—all are of good import. The adjective Śūneṣita 'drawn by the dog,' (śunā-iṣita) is in that sense, an instance of the aluk-samāsa with the instrumental suffix not lost. Thus we see, so far as the names of persons in the Vedic range are concerned the first member śuna has consistently conveyed good sense.

Why should it be different in the case of Śūnaśśépa? The pada text significantly enough does not analyse the word but shows the double accent, which is explained according to Pāṇini 6.2.140—Ubhe vanaspatyādiṣu yugapat (SK 3871).¹⁶⁶ The first member here is śunaḥ which is, apparently, genitive singular

161. Śuno Vāyuh śu etyantarikṣe sira ādityaḥ saraṇāt (Nir. IX. 40).

162. VI, II, p. 386.

163. Sukhena hūyate somo yair iti śunahotrāḥ pātraviśeṣāḥ—Sāyana on RV 2.18.6. Śunahotreṣu Ṛṣisamadeṣu asmāsu (2.41.14, 17). Preface to Second Maṇḍala—Maṇḍaladraṣṭā Ṛṣisamada ṛṣiḥ / Sa ca pūrvam Āṅgirasakule Śunahotrasya putrah san yajñakāle asurair gṛhita Indreṇa mocitah / Paścāt tadvacanenaiva Bhṛgukule Śunaka-putro Ṛṣisamadanāmā abhūt. Tathā cānukramanikā—Ya Āṅgirasas Śaunahotro bhūtvā bhārgavaś Śaunako'bhavat sa Ṛṣisamado divitīyam maṇḍalam apaśyad iti / Tathā tasyaiva Śaunakasya vacanam Ṛṣyanukramane—Tvam Agna iti Ṛṣisamadas Śaunako Bhṛgutām gataḥ / Śaunahotrah prakṛtyā tu ya Āṅgirasa ucyate //

164. Ibid.

165. Dr. A. Venkatasubbiah in his word study argues that śunam "signifies originally priya = dear, agreeable etc., and secondarily, svīya or own. The meaning sukha assigned to it by the author of the Nighaṇṭu seems to be but an approximate equivalent of the original priya, like all approximations, not quite accurate." pp. 61-66 IA. LVI (1927). Dr. A. V. has published his essays in book form entitled "Vedic Studies," published at Devaprāsāda, Mysore.

166. Vanaspati Brhaspati Śacīpati Tanūnapāt Narāśamsaḥ Śūnaśśépaḥ Śaṇḍāmarkau Trṣṇāvarūtrī Lambāviśvavayasau Marmṛtyuḥ iti vana-spatyādiḥ. See also VG, p. 96.

of śvan, 'dog'. It is a case, again, like śúnā-iṣita, for the aluk. But as true Vedic application demands, we should explore whether śunaḥ in this compound cannot mean or relate to happiness. In our opinion it can.

Before proceeding to elucidate this point, it would be well to discuss the other difficult member, śepa. This word is mentioned in the Nighaṇṭu along with Vaitasāḥ among 26 duets of names.¹⁶⁷ The meaning is not given.¹⁶⁸ The Nirukta explāins as follows : " Sepo Vaitasa iti pumsprajananasya / Śepas śapateḥ sprśati-karmaṇo vaitaso vitastam bhavati //"—Śepa and vaitasa are names of man's genital organ ; śepa from śap to touch and vaitasa because it is contracted.¹⁶⁹ The etymology is not supported by proper authority. Yāska was full of fancy, no doubt, but when he is likely to mislead, we have to look elsewhere. According to Uṇādi, śepa is derived from √ śī to lie down or sleep, II A with the suffixes puṭ and asun, which yields the form śepas. But the word ending in a is also found in usage as in ' prahārāma śépam '¹⁷⁰

Śepa is associated with śipi in RV 7.100. 5-6 meaning raśmi (ray) as explained by Yāska. Reminiscent of this, śepa must mean brightness or lustre :

Prá tát te adyá śipiviṣṭa náma
Aryáḥ śamsāmi vayúnāni vidván /
Tám tvā grṇāmi tavásam átavayān
Kṣáyantam asyá rájasah parāké //
Kím ít te viṣṇo paricákṣyam bhūt
Prá yád vavakṣé śipiviṣṭó asmi /
Má várpo asmád ápa gūha etát
Yád anyárūpaḥ samithé babhútha //¹⁷¹

Here śipiviṣṭa is used in two senses : (1) uncovered like the membrum virile (2) enveloped by rays.¹⁷² Now unless urged by the authority of these ancient

167. ...śepaḥ / vaitasāḥ / ...iti ṣaḍvimsatir dvivá uttarāṇi nāmāni / Nigh. 3.29.

168. Dr. S. K. Belvalkar thinks that this and the subsequent section of Ch. III of the Nighaṇṭu are, possibly, additions by a later hand. Being mere lists of words, the supposition is that, like the words (aikapadikas) of Ch. IV, they are also 'anavagatasamskāra' words, whose make-up, significance etc. are not known. We submit that sections 29 and 30 of Ch. III may just be two lists of words which were of the nature of anavagatasamskāra appended by the first compilers themselves. Did not the original compilers of the Nighaṇṭu (say of the first three chapters) meet with difficult words at all in the Veda ? —Reference AIOC II (Calcutta) S. K. Belvalkar on the Literary Strata of the Ṛgveda.

169. Nir. 3.21. Yásyām usántaḥ prahārāma śépam (RV 10.85.37) is quoted as example. Vaitaso vitastam upakṣīnam bhavati prāganusmaraṇāt striyāḥ—Durga.

170. Śīn svapne. Vṛṣṇībhyaṃ rūpasvāṅgayoh puṭ ca / (Uṇ 640) and Sarvadhātubhyaḥ asun / (Uṇ 628). Hence Śepas. Yadyapi śepasābdaḥ sakārāntaḥ gaurīṅgam cihnaśepasoh ityamara-prayogāt, tathāpi śīno nipātanād auṇādike papratyaye akārāntopyastyeva /

171. Tr. " Resplendent Viṣṇu, I, the master of the offering, knowing the objects that are to be known, glorify today thy name : I, who am feeble, praise thee who art powerful, dwelling in a remote region of this world.

What is to be proclaimed, O Viṣṇu, of thee, when thou sayest, I am śipiviṣṭa ? Conceal not, from us, thy real form, although thou hast engaged under a different form in battle."—Wilson.

172. Nir. 5.7-8. " Śipiviṣṭo viṣṇur iti Viṣṇor dve nāmāni bhavataḥ / Kutsitārthīyam bhavatītyaupamanyavaḥ " / Śepa iva nirveṣṭiteḥ (kutsitārthe) / Śipibhi raśmibhir āviṣṭaḥ iti vā /

propounders of Vedic thought like Yāska and Aupamanyava, there is nothing by way of internal evidence in the verses just quoted to support the *kutsitārtha*, the low sense. It is not infrequent that some good words are abused or used in a euphemistic way to denote some indecent things in human life ; the psychology is one of hearty aversion to give utterance to obscene things, e.g. the use of the word *marma* and *pradhāna*, the dialectal sense of which cannot even enter the lexicons. In the same manner it is not unlikely that an excellent word like *Śipi* meaning ray was abused. What harm if we restore it to its original purity and understand by *śepa* (*śipir eva śepaḥ*) a sense like ray, lustre, brilliance etc. ? The point is that *Śipi* or *śepa* does not directly mean man's genital organ. It can mean other things also, specially because the older work *Nighaṇṭu* has abstained from specifying its meaning.

There is some support that we can find from other classical languages.¹⁷³ Compare Latin *cipus*, *cippus* and its Gk. analogue *σκοιπος*, which mean a pile, post, pillar, staff, bar, etc. In the light of this, the original significance of *śepa* may be taken as a pillar or a post. And, if the first member in *Śunaśśepa* can be understood in the sense of *sukha*, happiness, the whole name yields a pleasant sense, viz. a pillar of happiness—a sense which is in perfect keeping with the great idea of Deliverance for which *Śunaśśepa* is all the time remembered.

This meaning is possible if the compound could be construed as a *tatpuruṣa* : *śunasya* (*sukhasya*) *śepaḥ* (*stambhaḥ*) *Śunaśśepaḥ*. How to account for the sibilant in between : it ought to be *Śunaśepaḥ* ? This is easily accounted by Pāṇini 6.1.157 (Sk. 1073)—*Pāraskaraprabhṛtini ca samjñāyām* / which the *Siddhānta Kaumudī* expands : *etāni sasutkāni nipātyante nāmni* / *pāraskaraḥ* / *kiṣkin-dhā* / *tad brhatoḥ* etc. / *coradevatayor iti samudāyopādhiḥ* / *taskaraḥ* / *Brhaspatih* / ...*Vanaspatih* / *ityādi* / *ākṛtiganoyam* /

The *Tattvabodhini* adds, with the flavour of a *double-entendre*,—*ākṛtiganoyamiti* / *Tena śatāt parāṇi*—*paraśśatāni kāryāṇītyādi siddham* /, suggesting that hundreds of such forms can be made, the word *paraśśata* itself being an example !

Thus the aphorism and its *vārtikas* declare that the instances are not limited and that on their analogy many others in usage can be comprehended. Moreover, *Vanaspati* (and hence *Vanaspatyādi*) is also added as coming within the purview of this rule. *Śunaśśepa* is definitely included in the *Vanaspatigana*¹⁷⁴ which, while taking the double accent which is a privilege peculiar to its own group, shares other grammatical incidences also, the *suḍāgama* in this case. Apart from the technical rule, it is needless to stress the phonetic rationale in the expression *Śunaśśepa*, where the sibilant helps to step up the pronunciation from the sonant to the surd. The argumentation reaches a fine point indeed, which may, in a way, be considered unnecessary because the human element in language sometimes defies

173. K. F. Johansson's note on *śepa*. *Indische Miszellen*, IF 3.213.

174. *Supra* Note 166.

all rule ; well, in fact it originates the rules and is unscrupulous enough to force exceptions also. The Tattvabodhini makes a very pertinent statement under the Pāraskara-Sūtra :

Pāram karoti pāraskaraḥ, kimapi dhatte kiṣkindhā, kim kim dadhāti
vā / Vastutastu rūḍhiśabdā etc kathañcid vyutpādyanta iti avayavārthe
nāgrahaḥ kāryaḥ /¹⁷⁵

The words are there in language ; attempts will be made to analyse and understand them ; there is no point in being fastidious. Thus the word Śunaśśepa can be analysed as a tatpuruṣa-samāsa : śunasya śepaḥ, being entitled to the suḍāgama as a member of the Vanaspati group which in turn is influenced by the Pāraskara rule.

This discussion encourages us to think that the padapāṭha of Śunaśśepa is faulty and requires to be emended, from Śunaḥ-śepaḥ to Śunā-śepaḥ. This involves us in a difficulty relating to the accent of the first member. The rule, Ubhe vanaspatyādiṣu yugapat,¹⁷⁶ prescribes to the two members their own accent (ubhayapadaprakṛtisvaratva). According to this, śuna as noun meaning happiness takes the prātipadika-svara¹⁷⁷ i.e. accent on the final and is so marked in the Nighaṇṭu—Śunām. But the text, has śunaḥ, the initial accent pointing to the great likelihood of its being, even originally, the gen. sing. of śvan, substantive ; for in śunaḥ, the genitive, being a sup-pratyaya, is unaccented ;¹⁷⁸ the accent remains on the stem.

Whereas we have sufficient ground to put up a case for the emendation of the pada-text, the emendation of the accent thereof is a natural corollary : Śunā-śepaḥ : Śunāśśepaḥ. Following the tendency of the scholiast, it is not difficult to argue for the initial accent of śuna even as a substantive. The prātipadika-svara is taken advantage of, usually, when the word defies derivation according to Śākaṭāyana (the Uṇādi-sūtras). Indeed this exercise is a somewhat thankless job because in great many cases the root-meaning hardly helps the semantic understanding of the word. All the same it speaks of the profound linguistic speculations of the ancient grammarians to have evolved a grammatical machinery which can dissect the word into its very elements. Therefore derive śunam from √śun, to go, VI P.¹⁷⁹ Add the suffix asun provided by “Sarvadhātubhyaḥ asun” (Uṇ. 628) ; we get the form śunas which has the initial accent,¹⁸⁰ meaning, movement,

175. The first sentence is an epitome of the com., the second is a quotation. See SK. with Tattvabodhini etc. (Nirnayasāgar, Bombay 1942), p. 221 (Sk. 1073).

176. Sk. 3871 (P. VI.2.40)

177. Phiṭ I 1 following Sk. 3704. “Phiṣonta udāttaḥ”

178. Sk. 3706 (P. III 1.4) “anudāttau suppitau.”

179. Dhā. 1423 Śuna gatau (tu. pa.se) (Sk. NS edn. p. 410). Dhā 1337 acc. BORI (Chitrav-Pāṭhak). What a wide difference in the enumeration of the roots, almost to a hundred. Such differences are found in the Aṣṭādhyāyī and the Siddhānta Kaumudī also from publication to publication. A standard edition of all these works which are indispensable to every scholar is a great desideratum.

180. SK. 3683 (P. VI 1.197) ānityādir nityam.

progress, prosperity, happiness. Further, Śúnasaḥ śepaḥ Śúnaśśépaḥ, which explanation has not got to invoke the *śudāgama* at all!¹⁸¹ Why not prefer this explanation which agrees with the given accent of the Vedic Text? It is for the simple reason that a certain Vedic tradition had already a word like *śunām* meaning happiness and on the analogy of other Vedic words like *Bṛhaspati*; Śúnaśśépa also could be more authoritatively explained.

There is a further important clue in this logical procedure which led us to venture on an emendation of the Pada-text and through that—may the Gods forgive!—on a slight change of accent in the *Samhitā* also. Here is a basis for some conjecture which is in no way idle. That we have interfered with the authenticity or exactitude of the pada-pāṭha need cause no surprise. The pada-pāṭha is not infallible, as shown long ago by Yāska himself—

(a) Commenting on RV 5.39.1. (yádindra citra meháⁿāstī) Yāska says—Yad Indra citram cāyanīyam mamhanīyam dhanam asti / Yan ma iha nāstīti vā trīṇi madhyamāni padāni /¹⁸² Durga, in support, adds :—Bahvṛcānām mehanā ityekam padam / Chandogānām trīṇyetāni padāni “ma iha na” iti / The divergence of the Pada and *Samhitā* pāṭhas is thus borne out by the evidence of the *Sāmaveda*. Durga further characterises this “mehanā” as one of the *anavagatas*¹⁸³ ‘not understood’, of the *vibhāgānavagata* type *i.e.* words whose division is not definitely known.

(b) The *svarānavagata*, an expression which raises difficulty of accent, has resulted in an erroneous pada-pāṭha *e.g.* in ‘Vāne ná vāyó nyadhāyī cākān’¹⁸⁴ RV 10.29.1. Commenting on this, Yāska says :—Vana iva vāyo veḥ putras cāyanniti vā kāmaya^{mā}na iti vā / veti ca ya iti ca cakāra Śākalyaḥ / Udāttam tvevam ākhyātam abhaviṣyat asusamāptaś cārthaḥ /—Śākalya has analysed vāyaḥ into vā and yaḥ : then the finite verb would have had the accent¹⁸⁵ and the sense would have been incomplete.

(c) We have now added the case of Śúnaśśépa. It is our belief that the story of Śúnaśśépa, as given in AB, was current with its component parts developed, by the time Śākalya formulated the pada-pāṭha; and that Śākalya, while he pieced together the *Samhitā* and provided the division into words (*śakala* = bits), very probably exercised the liberties of an editor and exponent. This circumstance

181. Śunas and Śunam may both be admissible like śepas and śepa as adverted to above. Words that end in -a as well as -s are not uncommon, *e.g.* nabham, nabhas; tapam, tapas; saham, sahas; maham, mahas; tamam, tamas; rajam, rajas.—from *Dvirūpa-kośa* quoted by Tattvabodhinī on Un. 628 (p. 560 Sk. NS Edn. 1942).

182. Nir. IV 4. (p. 360 BSS Vol. I).

183. The *anavagatasamskāras* are of ten kinds. That is, the words offer difficulties in the way of understanding a text in ten ways. Padajāti-abhidheya-svara-samskāra-guṇa-vibhāga-krama-viksepa-adhyāhāra-vyavadhānāni / Teṣu cābhidheyam apeksya nirvacanam kartavyam / See pp. 857-858 *Nirukta-Bhadrakamkar*—I. BSS.

184. Nir. VI 28. See pp. 690, 693, *Bhadrakamkar* I (BSS).

185. P. VIII 1,66 (Sk. 8970) *Yadvṛttānityam*. Durga has fully explained the discrepancy of the pada-pāṭha. “Etasmin nigame padavibhāgagataḥ kaścid vicāroṣti tam āha bhāṣyakāraḥ etc. etc.” p. 693.

lends support to the view that RV 1.24.12-13 are a later interpolation, probably by Śākalya, which hypothesis we submitted in the early part of this essay. RV 5.2.6 “Śúnás cicchépam” must be regarded as an anavagatasamskāra of the vikṣepānavagata type *i.e.* words whose separation into parts becomes unintelligible.¹⁸⁶

(d) Many a verse from the R̥gveda we find repeated in the other Saṁhitās. In this process, many *variae lectiones* will reveal themselves. In dealing with RV 3.31.6, in the previous chapter, we recorded a number of v.1.¹⁸⁷ between RV, MS and TB. Some v.1. are found in AV also (*cf.* RV 4.57.8 with AV 3.17.5, for instance). This fact is cited just to reconcile oneself to the fact that the most wonderfully accurate transmission of the Vedic texts withal, a few variations or even pitfalls here and there—utterly negligible, indeed, in proportion to the huge mass of literature—may be discovered ; it may not be sin to know them ! Even so with the pada-pāṭha.

One more point before concluding this investigation. Śunaśsepa is also written with aspiration as Śunaśsepha. This is a post-Vedic phonetic change only, perhaps contributed by the Gauḍa country. We find the pha in Gorresio's text of Rām. Wilson has adopted that spelling in his translation of the Viṣṇu Purāṇa (quarto) and opines that is the ‘usually written form,’¹⁸⁸ which statement reminds us of his long stay in Calcutta. The English translations of Purāṇic texts from Bengal adopt the pha while the Vedic texts of the BI series stick to the original form, pa. Yet, some etymological reflection may not be undue. Śepha is reminiscent of Śīpha or Śīphā, just as Śepa is of Śīpi. Śīphā, or Śīphā-kanda according to Amarasimha, means fibre, stalk, or fibrous root.¹⁸⁹ Monier Williams records both m. and f. forms of the word, meaning fibrous root or root in general. Even this dialectal change helps the understanding of śepha in a good sense : thus śunasya sukhasya śepho mūlam, ‘the root of happiness’. Śunaśsepha of the story became that to the Aryan folk after the great Deliverance.

The orthography of Śunaśsepa requires mention. It is most commonly written as Śunaḥsepa ; in devanāgarī script also, with a *visarga* after Śuna. If this practice is meant to remind ourselves of the *aluk*, it is indeed scholarly precision. In our humble opinion, the phonetic delicacy is thereby disregarded ; try to pronounce as it is written—writing, we hope, is meant to follow pronunciation ; then, we see the rigidity of the canon or of our understanding thereof. Even granting the *aluk*, what precludes the *visarga* from colaescing with the succeeding sibilant ? Double ś is not at all hard to pronounce being a breathed sound ; it only requires

186. See Durga on p. 358 already cited. *e.g.* “dyāvā naḥ pṛthīvī” iti yathā *cf.* BD 2.115 which recommends the order of words according to their sense—‘arthād āsīt kramo yathā,’ giving a third example narā vā śamsam. *Cf.* RV Pr. 2.43.

187. Notes 18, 22 and 24.

188. Note on RV 1.24 in his translation of RV Vol. I, p. 59 of the original edition. Moreover, he persists in writing the word as sakārānta, Śunaḥsepas, which is a fad similar to his Viśwadevas, not Viśvedevas ! Such instances are not uncommon among scholars in general.

189. Karahāṭas śīphākandaḥ kiñjalkaḥ kesaro'striyaṁ /

a little more breath ! On the other hand, imagine the convulsions in the resonance chamber when we pronounce the visarga followed by the first sibilant ś, the two to be pronounced as distinct sounds. It is to avoid this strain on the vocal organs that rules like the Pāraskara one are conceived. It will be equally just to respect 'Pāraskaraprabhṛtini' (Sk. 1073) in this case ; and the famous maxim about coalescence :

Samhitaikapade nityā nityā dhātūpasargayoḥ /
nityā samāse vākye tu sā vivakṣām apekṣate //

Rv Prātiśākhya clinches the whole issue when it says that the visarga before a breathed conjunct consonant is wrong and definitely gives the correct form as Śunaśśepa [saṃyogāder ūṣmaṇaḥ pūrvam āhur visarjaniyam adhikam svaropadhāt/³³]

The current orthography of words like Śaṃkara and alaṃkāra urges comment, but we must desist out of deference to the revered teachers. Liberty is nobody's monopoly, yet it is everybody's first claim !

To sum up :

(a) The ugliness of the name Śunaśśepa and of the antecedents of his personality are a later fancy, dating, possibly, even from the time of the pada-pāṭha. Its original significance points to Śunaśśepa being a 'pillar of happiness.'¹⁹⁰

(b) The pada-pāṭha of the word Śunaśśepaḥ, given as Śunaḥśepaḥ, reminding us of the aluksamāsa and also of the first member being the gen. sing. of Śvan, is defective. An emendation thereof as Śuna-śepaḥ is not illogical.^{190a}

(c) With a little shifting of the accent, the emendation will be better as Śunaśśepaḥ in the samhita-pāṭha and Śunā-śepaḥ in the pada.

(d) The pada-pāṭha is not infallible as proved by the ancient exponent of the Veda, Yāska, whose criticism of its author Śākalya is marked by a peculiar candour, which warrants a supposition that the pada-kāra was not far anterior of the Nirukta-kāra.

(e) The word Śunaśśepa came to have an aspiration at the end (Śunaśśepha), as a dialectal peculiarity, found in the regions of Bengal.

(f) The orthography of the word Śunaśśepa requires proper appreciation. Śunaśśepa is the correct form, whereas Śunaḥśepa is wrong, unscientific and pretentious.

190. Compare the expression. He is a tower of strength.

190a RV Prāti. XIV 33 and 36. ed. and trans. by Dr. Mangal Deva Sastri in 3 vols. Vols. II and III are published (Allahabad and Lahore) 1931, 1937. Cf. Uvāṭa's explanation of sūtra 38. Svaropadhāt saṃyogāder ūṣmaṇaḥ pūrvam adhikam visarjaniyam āhuḥ / sa doṣo varjyaḥ / Again on 36. Śunaśśepaḥ, Niṣapī etc. ityete'vikramā bhavanti / Eteṣu vikramo visarjaniyaḥ sa doṣo varjyaḥ / Śunaśśepaḥ (RV I 24.12) etc.

XI

SUMMARY

1. The story of Śunaśśepa's deliverance¹⁹¹ is a Vedic fact. According to one Seer, Śunaśśepa was saved from a thousand-fold stake by Agni (RV 5.2.7) while another singer praises Varuṇa for having freed him from his bonds (1.24.12,18). Śunaśśepa himself is one among the centurion seers (śatarcins : seers of hundred verses) to whom is attributed the revelation of the first maṇḍala of the R̥gveda.

2. The other Samhitās know him as seized by Varuṇa (varuṇa-grhīta) and then freed on praising him with RV 1.24.15 (Ūduttamām), which is a very favourite prayer to Varuṇa, in almost all the Samhitās, that he might graciously release the worshipper from his threefold pāśa, at the head, in the middle and at the bottom. This stanza in later times inspired a philosophic interpretation, that it was an appeal for freedom from worldly ties.

3. It is the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa (7.13-18) that spins a complete narrative of the legend. It is repeated, with slight difference only, by the Śāṅkhāyana Śrauta Sūtra. The central theme of Śunaśśepa's escape from sacrificial immolation has been linked at the beginning and at the end to two other episodes. The introductory link is provided by Hariścandra and his son Rohita whose entanglement with God Varuṇa brings about the main event of sacrificing Śunaśśepa. The concluding link is provided by Viśvāmitra, the universal friend, to whose family Śunaśśepa after release is adopted as the eldest son inheriting both regal authority and divine lore from the adoptive father. The narrative is a mixture of the Brāhmaṇic prose and the popular gāthā. It has been supposed that the legend perhaps existed in the form of a ballad even before AB.

4. Works like the Sarvānukramṇī which are but ancillaries to the Veda repeat the story as given in AB. The famous commentators, Ṣaḍguruśiṣya and Sāyaṇa and their ditto Dyā Dviveda scrupulously follow AB and show no influence of the other version of the story, though it was positively current in their times.

5. In later literature, the two epics, the Harivaṁśa and Vāyu Purāṇa present a different version of the story, which is believed to reflect the popular account of it. The Brāhma, Bhāgavata and Devī Bhāgavata repeat the Aitareya, herein called the orthodox version, with slight innovations here and there which reflect the local taste and temperament in their respective ages.

6. The Legend of Śunaśśepa provides good scope for sociological study in successive stages. The eager theorist can suspect cannibalism and human sacrifice once upon a time. Sale of children and eating dog's flesh are indications of the

191. It was stated above that the Legend of Śunaśśepa was prescribed to be recited at the Coronation ceremony of Kings. W. H. Robinson states that this corresponds to the precise point where a copy of the Holy Bible is presented by Bishops to the British Sovereigns when crowned at Westminster. (See 'The Golden Legend of India or the story of India's god-given Cynosure' by W. H. Robinson, Luzac & Co., London, 1911).

extent to which poverty could drive the people. Manu absolves the ancient ṛṣis of the taint of crime nevertheless.¹⁹² The theory of the prevalence of human sacrifice is rejected by almost all scholars. It is provided for in some sociological texts to give the stamp of perfection to the theoretical structure of sacrifice. The Śunaśśepa Legend is a protest against human sacrifice which the Aryans found prevalent in the land, when they arrived from the north-western regions. The Indus Valley experts have unearthed evidence to think that human sacrifice prevailed as a custom in the age envisaged by the finds.

7. A study of the name Śunaśśepa has been presented in detail in an attempt to inquire whether the name was, in the time of RV, of an uncomplimentary significance. It has been possible to establish that it could have signified worthily, a "pillar of happiness" in consonance with the great idea of Deliverance for which Śunaśśepa's name is immortalised. Śunaḥpuccha and Śunolāṅgūla are spurious names, and the concept of the 'middle one,' to propound which only these names were conceived, is psychologically unsound and, what is more, prone to inculcate unethical ideas into credulous minds. Incidentally, the infallibility of the pada-pāṭha and its hoary antiquity within the Vedic Age have become matters of doubt. Human nature being the same always, the sacred texts seem to be no exception to the falterings of transmission through the holiest agencies of old, the Ṛṣis and the Ācāryas.

192. Ajigartas sutam hantum upāsarpad bubhuṣitaḥ /
na cālipyata pāpena kṣutpratikāram ācaran // (MŚ 10.105)